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Letter from the Director of Writing

Dear Composition Student:

Welcome to the fourth edition 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 and fifty 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.

However, 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. 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. In effect, our intention is not for you to imitate these essays. Your English 134 instructor will 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 writing at Cal Poly, including information about the University Writing and Rhetoric Center, the Graduation Writing Requirement, and advice that could help you succeed in your composition course. I also encourage you to become familiar 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.

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.

In my experience directing the writing program and teaching English 134, I have noted that students who stick with their old methods of writing—despite what they are learning in the class—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  
Department of English
Fresh Voices: Navigating Our Lives & Our Worlds

Composition at Cal Poly
Writing in English 134

While each section of English 134 has the instructors’ unique approach to teaching writing embedded within the curriculum, these sections still tend to follow a basic template, thereby ensuring that each section meets the same goals. While the papers you write in your course may not be exactly the same as the assignments described below, you will likely be writing papers that are very similar in focus and approach. Rather than arranging Fresh Voices according to these assignments, as we have done in the past, you will see that the essays are grouped together by theme. We believe this arrangement points to the creative ways in which English 134 instructors approach these standard assignments.

Sequence I: Your Writer’s History

This essay is often written during the first week of English 134—although some instructors require students to revisit and revise it again at the end of the quarter. In these essays, students reflect on their experiences as writers, drawing attention to the importance of developing a writing process, the challenges of writing, and the sense of accomplishment they experience after recognizing their development as writers. You may find yourself nodding in agreement as you read these essays because you may have had similar experiences in your own “writer’s history.” Ultimately, these students are assessing their own abilities as writers so they can better understand the work they have before them in English 134. Please note that these essays go beyond just telling a story: they each have a discernable focus and a goal. As you read, consider your own experiences with writing. How did you become the writer you are today? What challenges will you face as you develop your skills now that you are writing for a college audience?

Sequence II: Profiling a Person, Place, or Event

For the profile sequence, instructors select a theme—such as the environment, media, local culture—and ask students to interview people who work within this area, while others simply ask students to use this assignment to become better acquainted with an aspect of someone’s life, a well-loved place, or even 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. You will need to devise provocative questions that allow your subject to give fully developed responses. But remember, this essay is created and shaped by you. In other words, your profile subject needs to speak with you as a writer, not for you.

You will find that this assignment challenges you to synthesize multiple texts and viewpoints: including your analytic response to your interviewee’s work, the interview itself, and, when appropriate, your own experiences and responses. In addition, you must account for and write to an audience that does not have knowledge of your essay’s subject matter. In other words, you need to present your own “insider’s perspective” about the profile subject.

In each of the profile essays included in this volume of Fresh Voices, students carved out distinctive approaches to the assignment—approaches that permitted them to explore exceptional elements found in cultures surrounding them. As you read these essays, note the ways in
which the writers attempt to allow the profiles’ subjects to teach you about the talents of their family members (whether weaving or snapping photos), about activities in which they have a personal interest (including DJ-ing and sword fighting), and about their chosen vocations (such as joining a Buddhist monastery).

Sequence III: Public Rhetoric and Argumentation

For this sequence, students choose a public issue and write a persuasive essay supporting their viewpoint. The authors explore their subjects, often in terms of their life experiences, and address the concerns of those who hold different positions. Though the persuasive essays in this book cover a broad range of topics—including stem cell research, music in education, sustainability, and video gaming—the authors have a personal stake in their chosen topic, an important component which can bring energy to any persuasive essay. Some of the writers propose a vision of the world they would like to see in the future.

You will soon learn that a well-written and fully-supported argument requires you to conduct research both to support your own claims and to fairly depict opposing viewpoints. You will also learn to use the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos (defined below) to persuade and connect with your chosen audience. Regardless of the topic you choose, it's generally best to select 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.

The Three Rhetorical Appeals

Throughout your English 134 course, you will encounter three rhetorical concepts that may be new to you: ethos, pathos, and logos. We have borrowed these terms from Aristotle, who long ago argued that every writer who wants to address his or her audience effectively must account for these concepts. If, when writing an essay, you forget to consider how to best communicate with and persuade your reader, your essay may not be deemed successful.

So when writing, keep these three concepts in mind:

Ethos: Credibility

When we use this term, we are simply talking about credibility. In other words, writers must develop a strong ethos in their essay in order for readers to regard the argument as credible. Audiences are most persuaded by writers who have the knowledge to write intelligently about a given subject, and audiences trust writers who present information accurately and fully. On the other hand, they don’t trust writers who leave out relevant information or who don’t work with reliable sources. For instance, if a writer continually relies on web pages with no clear authors or publication dates, the argument may not be convincing. However, if a writer uses sources that have a track record of presenting information without a great deal of bias and that promote writers who do trustworthy research, the writer’s own ethos is increased and the audience is more likely to be persuaded. Ethos can also be developed when a writer simply shares a relevant personal experience that gives him/her insider knowledge. So if you want to write an essay about water politics and your family owns a farm that struggles to obtain an adequate
amount of water, it would make sense to share that information in your essay in order to build credibility as a writer. There are many ways to develop your ethos—some of them quite subtle. You will study these approaches in your course.

**Pathos: Emotion**

Writers want their readers to have some emotional response to their writing. But, in order to ensure that readers share your emotions when reading your work, you must first attempt to predict the elements that will encourage your readers to engage with your writing on an emotional level. But the question is, how do you want the readers to feel? Do you want them to feel anger? Frustration? Sadness? Joy? Do you want them to feel motivated to go out into the world and make changes? How do you get a reader to feel as intensely about a subject as you do? When deciding which words best convey your ideas, keep in mind which words convey emotion. And keep in mind the beliefs and values and other personal attributes that readers respond to emotionally.

**Logos: Reason**

Though a piece of writing must make some attempt to rely on pathos, emotions must still be balanced with logic. Logos refers to the entire structure of an argument. Does the argument overall make rational sense? Have you selected the kinds of sources that will encourage your reader to be persuaded by the logic of the argument? Perhaps you will want to look at scientific studies. Perhaps you can find some useful statistics to back up your ideas. But look for smaller ways to build a logical argument. Using language like, “everyone knows…” automatically forces the reader to question your logic. After all, is there anything that “everyone knows”? Can you really account for everyone? As you conduct research and structure your essays, keep in mind that audiences like to see information presented rationally and logically.

**Using the Appeals Together**

Clearly, every effective paper has all three of these elements coursing through it. However, some arguments—depending on their subject and purpose—may require that one appeal be stronger than the other two. For instance, if you are writing an argument about a highly technical subject, you may find yourself relying on logos more than pathos. Conversely, you can also find support for an argument that relies on all three appeals equally. For instance, you may find a statistic about the harm done to the marine life in the recent Gulf Oil Spill. This one bit of evidence approaches the topic logically (logos), makes your reader feel both angry and sad (pathos), and, because the evidence is from a good, independent source, helps develop your credibility (ethos).
“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 (logos), how they evoke an emotional response from a viewer (pathos), or how (when used effectively) images can enhance a writer’s or speaker’s credibility (ethos). Yet focusing on images in a writing course raises certain questions: How can images enhance writing? How do they affect an argument? 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, in Kris Schobert’s essay, “Shine On,” he includes a photo of himself in the second-grade, and in Julianna Hein’s essay, “The Woman Behind the Weave,” she includes images of her grandmother and her work. Without these images, the audience may not be able to fully engage with both authors’ ideas. 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 photographs of the Geisha paintings below, the photographs matched with each section, and the 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 in this collection were generously contributed by Marya Figueroa, Angela Rezai, and Svyatoslav Markeyev.
Like writing, painting requires determining a subject, outlining, and retouching. After examining the Geisha painting above and the one on the next page, list the details that make each unique. For example, contemplate the subjects’ facial expressions, the placement of their hands, the umbrellas they hold, and how each Geisha occupies her physical environment. What is the focal point of the image? In other words, where does your eye “go” first? In addition, what messages are conveyed through the artist’s choices?
Geisha 2
Contemplating Our Lives

How would you adjust if everything familiar to you changed? Many of us can recall a time when a challenge forced us to contemplate change, and/or take risks. The essays in this section focus on people who have taken risks, people who have inspired change in others, and people who have had to change themselves. For instance, Jennifer Balidio describes the challenges she faces while writing, Kris Schobert examines the challenges he faced growing up with Alopecia Areata, and Eileen Wu challenges Cal Poly’s current dining plan. As you read, contemplate the challenges that have shaped you into the individual you are today.

The above photograph, titled, *two roads diverged yadda yadda country stix*, presents viewers with two roads, though we often have more than two options to consider at any given moment in our lives. Sometimes choosing between two options can prove to be challenging, however. Imagine yourself at this intersection with no map, GPS, or cell phone. Would you stay and wait for someone to show you the way, or would you take a risk by finding your own way?

If you could interact with the scene depicted above, what would you do? Would you use the swing or would that feel like trespassing? Why do you think the author titled the image “Serene Sunset in the Field”? What makes this image “serene”?

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Editors’ Note

In this writer’s history, Jennifer Balidio uses an extended metaphor to explain her issues learning to write a good conclusion. How does the “sweet” metaphor enable Balidio to share her struggle descriptively? What is the chronological or point-by-point path the writer creates for you to follow as she explains her writing problems? What is the purpose of Balidio’s use of italics, and does it help you to understand her as a writer and a narrator? Was the author successful in her attempt to map a history that includes failure, transitions, and finally, accomplishment as Balidio tastes “sweet” success in her conclusion? What does this essay leave you feeling? What extended metaphor can you use when developing your writer’s history essay?

Sweet to the Last Sip

Jennifer Balidio

Finishing off a warm and delicious mint chocolate ice cream sundae with a feeling of satisfaction is like getting to the end of a well-written essay. The conclusion of an essay is the grand finale of a Tchaikovsky Symphony in Carnegie Hall—the memory of it will be the last thing you remember as it reverberates through your mind. I have always thought of myself as a decent writer. I knew the structure of writing an essay, and I didn’t think too much of the conclusion, I’ve always told myself, “Writing the conclusion is easy! Just repeat everything you said in the introduction!” Then, 10th grade came around and Mrs. Lawrence, a tall woman with fiery red hair and clacking black heels towered over us.

I have never really liked writing, but I seemed to float effortlessly through grade school following the basic structure of an essay—mostly caring about my body paragraphs. My least favorite part of writing an essay was getting to the conclusion. For me, it was like reaching the end of a marathon, I had already crossed the finish line after my last body paragraph. I had nothing left in me. I was puzzled by how genius writers concocted philosophical, thought-provoking conclusions that stuck in your brain. I was content with my grades though and didn’t feel the need to change my writing style.

Before I knew it, my first essay was due in Mrs. Lawrence’s class. She asked us to describe and explain the major themes in the Utopian, science-fiction novel, *Brave New World*. I wrote my thesis and followed the usual structure: introduction, three body paragraphs, and a boring, lackluster conclusion. A few days later when I received my essay, I saw vibrant red marks splattered across the bright white pages of my essay. More importantly, I saw the huge letter “C” written across the top of the paper. “This conclusion leaves me wanting more. I need more,” she wrote in her scribble, which almost appeared like they were hieroglyphics. *What is that supposed to mean? What does she want more of? Did she want more words?* I had never gotten a “C” on an essay before. I approached her after class to ask about my paper. “Jennifer, read aloud to me your introduction, please,” I read it for her, “Now, read your conclusion for me, please,” she said in her raspy, low-pitched voice. “I don’t understand, Mrs. Lawrence, I summed up everything in my essay! What’s the big deal?” I raised my voice slightly. She explained to me that there was no way I could even think about getting an “A” in her class if I didn’t put more effort into conclusions. She could tell that I didn’t think conclusions were important, but they were Mrs. Lawrence’s “thing” and I didn’t have it.
A few weeks later, she assigned the second essay; this time it was on a topic I was interested in—existentialism in Albert Camus', *The Stranger*. I was excited to write this paper and had a lot to say. The idea of the absurd, individual existence, freedom, and choice fascinated me. I decided to sit down at Starbucks Coffee while sipping away an ice cold caramel frappuccino, determined to finish the essay. I wrote my introduction, I had strong arguments in my body paragraphs and I was getting into my paper while I vigorously sipped away at my frappuccino. Then, I sipped the straw one last time and the minute the liquid from the straw hit my tongue, I tasted lukewarm water. I had drunk all of the coffee from the cup and was left with a whimper, not a bang. *Wouldn’t all aspects of life be that much more interesting if everything ended with a delicious caramel memory lingering in your mind?* I had a sudden epiphany. This was exactly what Mrs. Lawrence was talking about. I was inspired by my cold beverage; I wouldn’t let this essay end lukewarm and watery, I wanted my readers to experience the heavenly, sweet taste of caramel in their mouth even after putting it down. I had realized that all this time I was disappointing my reader by thinking the conclusion didn’t matter. I felt the fuel burning beneath my rocket and wanted to write a compelling conclusion.

That’s exactly what I did, I worked hard at withholding some thoughts for the end to keep the reader’s interest and I refused to copy and paste my introduction. Mrs. Lawrence passed back our second essays. She placed it face down and as I anxiously turned it over I saw a bright red “B+” written across the top of my paper and the words, “Solid conclusion,” written at the end in her hieroglyphic handwriting. I smiled brightly with satisfaction, I was happy with a “B+.” I have accepted the fact that I am not a superstar writer, but I am happy just knowing that Mrs. Lawrence had tasted some caramel at the end of my essay.

*Jennifer Balidio is a psychology major.*
Small Beginnings

Kyleigh Rogers

It all began at a small desk in a preschool classroom. My tiny hands knew how to make no more than squiggly lines and the occasional letter, still unsure how to turn those letters into words. Fast forward fifteen years, and I am now a successful college student, with hundreds of written essays under my belt. How did I get this far? That is a question that has come to baffle me. Did it have to do with the diaries I kept as a preteen struggling with the pressures of middle school? Slightly. What about the endless social networking sites I have signed up for: Blurty, LiveJournal, Myspace, Facebook? Somewhat. Did it have to do with the English teachers and countless professionals whose paths I have crossed? Partially. There are many different contributing factors, all of which have made me the writer I am today.

Middle school consisted of three years that were extremely difficult for me. Me, and every other person who has ever endured that awkward stage in life. Between fighting with my parents over control, and struggling to fit in, yet stand out from my peers, I had more than enough material for my diaries. They were full of expression, mostly negative, but what else can one expect from a twelve-year-old drama queen? Looking back on this stage of writing, it taught me a lot about putting my emotion into my writing. I wrote in short sentences, with carefully chosen words, that were meant to get my message across to the reader with impact. When my mother wept after finding my diary, twice, I realized that I had accomplished that goal.

My diary was not the only form of self-expression that has supplied my writing. Blurty and LiveJournal were the beginning of my social-networking experience, closely followed by Myspace and Facebook. All have enabled me to write entries about my everyday life, my thoughts at any moment, and my encounters with people who have affected me. Through these sites, I was able to sample friends’ writing. The words and phrases they use, the style they form their sentences in, and the way they present their ideas, add to my writing history on a daily basis. My friend Shelby, for example, has always posted entries with perfect spelling and grammar. Following her example, I stopped typing “u” and “i” early in my social-networking career, spelling out my words and using proper capitalization. I also began using different words that had the same meaning to express how I felt about something. I used “sure” when asked to do something that was of little interest to me, or “definitely” when I was asked to do something I was excited about. Although both mean “yes,” they carry very different tones. Not only have these sites built my writing style, and further taught me how
to add emotion to my writing, but they have taught me to give the reader what he or she may be looking for as well.

My new-found knowledge of giving the reader what he or she is looking for has not always been successful. Actually, it failed me quite often when it came to my eleventh grade American Literature teacher, Mr. Firestein. If you want conflict, this man not only created conflict in my life, but every other student life that he encountered. Firestein loved to prove you wrong. Many of our assignments consisted of analyzing the novel, short story, movie, or image we were given. There was no right answer, there were only wrong answers. How I got through an hour of class with that man everyday for an entire year without pulling my hair out is a wonder. However, at the end of that gruesome year, I came out of Firestein’s class with a new outlook. I began to notice that what the author meant can only be assumed. Without asking the author, there is no right or wrong answer. Everyone has a different perspective, not one more correct than the last. This realization brought a new understanding to my writing. Although everyone has a different perspective, it is important to add emotion to my writing so that the audience is able to analyze my thoughts and feeling to the best of their ability. Without clarity, it is only a guessing game.

My writing history is much like the building blocks you may have found next to my small desk in preschool. From trying to fit in with my peers on LiveJournal, to believing that I knew what people wanted, to understanding that everyone perceives what I write differently, my writing has come a long way. Each year, a new building block has been placed. A new experience, a new idea, a new friend, a new teacher: these factors have all made me the person I am today, but more specifically, the writer I have grown to be. I write to appeal to the reader’s emotions. I try to find ways for the audience to relate to my writing, to keep their interest. So much analysis goes into every word choice, every sentence structure, every building block. After all of this, I have found that emotion is the key to my voice as a writer.

*Kyleigh Rogers is a social sciences major.*
Shine On

Kris Schobert

Once each individual strand of sunlight had fallen behind the horizon, my hair began softly drifting downward from my innocent, seven-year-old head and settling onto my pillow as I slept. When I awoke to find my pillow doused in hair, I dashed to my parents’ bedroom, violently shook their bed, and pleaded for an answer. They were as bewildered as I was. The number of expressive wrinkles on my Mom’s forehead must have doubled due to her distress. My Dad, being a doctor, felt it was his responsibility to help me but was equally baffled since his specialty was orthopedics. After this ritual continued for a week or so, my parents decided it was time to seek medical attention.

I recall sitting in an uncomfortable, wooden chair in a chilled office waiting for the doctor to come in and reveal my fate. After a long ten minutes, he entered with his chart and a misshapen smile. He disclosed that I had been diagnosed with Alopecia Areata, which is an allergic response to one’s hair. It falls out. A wave of self-consciousness swept over me as I came to the realization that my physical appearance would now be completely different to all those around me. I was bald.

Although I felt hopeless at the time, my disease ultimately led me to mature into a distinguished, understanding, unique individual. I spent the rest of that summer hiding from the public as much as possible. Once, my Dad and I were driving to McDonald’s to get some lunch. I was content with coming along since the restaurant had a drive-thru, and my Dad’s car windows were tinted. I would be completely out of public view. On the way home, my Dad without warning decided to get a cup of coffee at the local coffee shop. He wanted me to come inside with him since it took roughly ten minutes to prepare the drink. I was not about to reveal my nakedness to a dozen judgmental caffeine addicts, so I refused to go. My Dad insisted that I come since ten minutes was too long to leave me alone in the car. That valid point might as well have been spoken in some alien language since it meant nothing to me. I was staying in the car and nothing was going to change that. We left the parking lot with a vacant cup holder, and a feeling of guilt within me, since I wouldn’t even attempt to conjure up the courage to walk into a coffee shop.
After that long and overwhelming summer, I found myself walking through the gates of my elementary school with a brand new, navy blue, corduroy baseball cap on my head. I never took it off at school for fear of being taunted for my condition, but during P.E. one gloomy Friday afternoon, the unthinkable happened. Instead of having us perform numerous jumping jacks and run two gruesome laps around the track, which was our normal routine, our instructor decided to cut us some slack since the weekend was right around the corner. We were going to play the harmless, innocent game of duck-duck-goose instead. Ecstatic hooting and hollering filled the air as we all sat in a circle. After a few minutes of anxiously waiting to be called upon, I felt the swift sensation of a hand pressing down on the button that held together the triangular sections of fabric of my baseball cap, and then releasing with a noticeable sense of urgency. I swung my upper body a full ninety degrees, uncrossed my legs, and darted toward my target. I was closing the gap, when all of a sudden it happened. I had gotten so lost in the moment that I had completely forgotten to hold down my hat. My disguise went flying, and my bare head was revealed. My peers erupted in laughter as I dashed in the opposite direction to snatch my blown cover. No. This could not have just happened. The months of successfully concealing my baldness were now concluded due to this involuntary, demeaning confession.

I came home that afternoon and told my parents about the incident. They were very concerned and decided it was time we had a crucial talk. They sat me down in my bedroom. My father asked me, “Do you think it’s about time to start going to school without your hat. You don’t look bad without hair, just different.” I was much more accepting of that possibility since most of my classmates were now aware of my baldness. “Not yet, but maybe sometime soon,” is what I left them with. However, I did begin to leave the house hatless on the weekends. I was surprised to find that people weren’t as harsh as I had imagined. Some would look at me, but they didn’t glare. I became more and more comfortable with my condition as time went on. By that summer, I began to leave the house as the proud, bald child I was. I can still recall that glorious freedom of abandoning that hat completely. I remember prancing through the neighborhood park. I sprinted across the grassy field and for the first time could feel the crisp air crest over my scalp. No longer would that heavy cotton weight restricted me.

As the new school year started, I was more than ready to just be myself. I recall strutting onto the blacktop in the early morning on the first day of third grade with nothing but a warm, liberating shine atop my head. I was ready to astonish all my classmates; however I was the one astonished. I found no weird looks, and very minimal cocked heads. I went over to the foursquare court for further experimentation. Again, everyone treated me just as they always had, as their friend. As it turns out, all of my friends had already accepted my baldness. From that day on, I have always felt an abundance of support from those around me, including my
classmates, teachers and most of all my parents. I will always be thankful for the encouragement they gave me.

As the years have passed, my baldness has affected me in many aspects. It has led me to feel certain empathy for those who have trouble fitting in. During one of my high school track and field practices, a teammate and I were running warming up laps around the track. All of a sudden, I looked over to find him yelling at a student over by the bike racks. He began taunting this person; calling him fat and saying that he would crush a bike if he were to sit on one. I was appalled. I felt a certain understanding towards this student, since I had been in his position in similar situations. The immaturity of my teammate sickened me, and I have since distanced myself from him.

Not only has being bald giving me insight with respect to people and their insecurities, but it has actually inspired me to be more distinct and original. I feel that living with a unique appearance for a few years has affected my personality and actions; leading them to be more unique as well. This aspiration is reflected well in my songwriting. Ever since I was twelve years old, I have been in bands and writing songs. When I am composing a song I have this obsession of making the tune sound original. During my junior year of high school I felt I needed to be more open and outgoing in social situations. Songwriting is very therapeutic for me, thus I decided to write about this difficulty. The lyrical content of the piece was quite original in my opinion. I chose to tell the story of a man who keeps to himself, dies alone, and ultimately regrets his lifestyle. It took me several weeks to develop original vocal melodies, and guitar riffs. Once I completely finished the song, I was very pleased with the outcome for I had created a novel rock song. If it weren’t for my desire to be unique and original, I feel my passion for music would have faded years ago, possibility being only a pre-teen pipedream of popularity and stardom.

One last way being bald has affected me is that ever since I took of my hat; the title of “the bald kid” has been with me. I am in no way offended by this. I somewhat enjoy the persona. I often will meet people who have seen me at summer camps, at school, or around town. I know this sounds a bit childish, but it’s fun for me. I feel like some sort of celebrity. I get a real kick out of meeting people who already know me. It is defiantly an amusing aspect of being bald.

I am often asked if I could grow my hair back would I? Maybe being bald has grown on me, or maybe the sense of personal dignity I have gained is the explanation. Whatever the reason, I always answer no. I embrace being “the bald kid.” While having no hair sets me apart from the crowd, you may be “the soccer girl” or “the surfer dude” or “the smart kid.” We all are unique individuals, with interesting personalities and talents. We each have our own stories of developing personas and growing from them. I will be forever grateful for my story, which began the moment the sun set on that first dreary night, the episodes of darkness that followed, and that beautiful, sunny morning on the first day of third grade. Without this journey, I would have never grown from a shy, scared, little boy, into the compassionate, dignified, bald man I am today.

Kris Schobert is a physics major.
In her essay, Julianna Hein profiles her grandmother, Mummi, and shows the complex role weaving plays in Mummi’s life. In Mummi’s weaves, Hein can see her Finnish heritage, her grandmother’s battle with cancer, and her devotion to her faith, all of which combine to create a well-rounded view of Mummi. Do you know anyone who is defined by a specific activity or hobby? Are you? In order for the reader to better understand Mummi, Hein includes images of her grandmother. How do these images shape your understanding of Mummi? Could more written description be just as useful, or do the images bring a new dimension to the written word? In addition, Hein chose not to use captions with her images. Would captions have been useful to you as a reader? What captions would you have written?

The Woman Behind the Weave

Julianna Hein

My grandmother emigrated to the U.S. from Finland when she was only nineteen years old. For as long as I can remember, I have called her by the name of “Mummi” which is Finnish for grandmother. Mummi stands at a height of 5’3” and has two big blue eyes, which sit behind a pair of thick glasses. She has an adorable little accented voice and is the most amazing chef I know. Mummi was raised on a small farm in Finland and explained to me how “everything was produced in the home.” This makes perfect sense because almost everything in my grandmother’s home, including the actual home itself, has been created by my grandmother or grandfather. Every pillow, curtain, blanket, and decorative wall hanging is a product of Mummi’s love for the art of weaving.

Growing up, I didn’t understand much about weaving. My sister Elise and I would constantly play in the basement where all of Mummi’s weaving takes place. With an entire wall covered in brightly colored yarns and two large wooden looms and a spinning wheel, it was almost like being in a fairytale land. We would play hide-and-seek inside of the looms and have contests to see who could pick out the prettiest colors. It wasn’t until I grew older and Mummi began teaching me how to weave that I started to really appreciate what my grandmother does.

Weaving is a very slow and tedious act. It takes planning and precision and a lot of creativity. Before each masterpiece, Mummi sketches out her “plan” and figures out what design or pattern she will go with. She then prepares the large wooden loom with a “warp.” Mummi explained to me “the warp is what gives the weaving structure and holds it together.” After the loom is ready to go, she prepares the yarn by transforming it from a ball of yarn to a spool of yarn. This way, the spool can be sent back and forth quickly and easily. From then on it’s basically just a lot of repetition of pedals and changing colors. Mummi and I agreed that the most important part is creating the design because that’s where you can really get creative.

Mummi has designed many pieces in all her years of weaving. One of her greatest pieces is a giant wall hanging
she made for her church. Mummi felt that she wanted to give back, and she created a weaving for her church similar to the ones inside of Finnish churches. It is magnificent. The giant masterpiece is about ten feet across and bears a Christian symbol along with wheat as a representation of the Eucharist. It is all you see when you walk into the church with its rich purple, red and gold. When I asked her if religion affected her weaving, Mummi replied, “The piece [for the church] took a whole year, and a lot of prayer.” I think what she meant was that without God’s help, she couldn’t have made such a beautiful piece of artwork. She truly is blessed with a gift, a gift that she is very generous with.

After she first learned how to weave, Mummi decided she wanted to share weaving with as many people as possible. She opened a yarn shop in 1972 as a way of importing high-quality yarns from Finland. She explained to me that she met a lot of friends through having a shop of her own. It was also a very good way to network with other weavers as well as acquire clients for her artwork. To this day, many people have her make custom blankets and wall hangings and she is quite well known in the “world of weaving.” Her favorite color to use in her artwork is any shade of blue, or as she says “Finnish colors.” She mainly describes her style as “colorful and textural” and I would agree. She brings items that would usually be ordinary, such as blankets and pillows, to life with bright color combinations and patterns.

Two years ago, Mummi was diagnosed with cancer. This came as a huge shock to her, as well as the whole family. I took it very hard, but I knew that if anyone were strong enough to battle cancer it would be Mummi. She was one of the healthiest people I know and always forced us grandchildren to eat healthily. The issue of her illness is a sensitive subject for her to talk about, so I didn’t ask too much about it in the interview. She did, however, tell me that weaving is a way for her to escape problems. She said, “Weaving gives me something to do, so that I don’t dwell too much on life’s problems.” She also told me that weaving has “enriched [her] life.” Since her diagnosis, Mummi has weaved almost every day. She is producing more blankets, rugs, and artwork than ever. I am glad my grandmother has an outlet that helps her to feel better and live life to the fullest.

Mummi has created numerous items for me, but my favorite is my big blue blanket. As I examine the beautiful blanket given to me on my last birthday, I study the intricate pattern and find a hidden story. Each thread, so small, is so intricately placed. Each thread however is part of a bigger picture—a grand piece of artwork. Not just any artwork, but artwork with a story and background. My grandmother’s whole life has been quite eventful. Between moving here from a small farming community in Finland when she was my age to go to school, to learning English and then opening a yarn shop of her own, she has been an example of just how much some creativity and hard work can do. My grandmother is always doing something, whether it is cooking, weaving, sewing, cleaning, or lecturing us grandchildren. In the midst of all this, she somehow makes order. She is the glue that holds the family together. Just like the “warp” threads in the blanket she wove me. Mummi is small and intricate, but her impact in the bigger picture is great.

There is a unique bond shared between the artist and the person that actually receives the artwork. By weaving art to fit the wishes of the consumer, my grandmother communicates
with her customers. She uses visual language—colors and patterns to reveal a message. This message takes her a long time to create and may not always be seen by all, but it is there. It can be a friendly message, a message of love, or even a message glorifying God. These tools that Mummi has mastered with her artwork evoke emotions that will last a long time. Because of this, weaving is one way that my grandmother is leaving behind a legacy that will last forever.

**Julianna Hein** is a bioresource and agricultural engineering major.

**Work Cited**

Make It Beautiful

Taylor Kilbride

She is beautiful. Her thick brown hair reaches down to the lower arch of her spine and falls around her back and arms like a veil just tossed over the head of a bride. A few wispy flyaways around her face and a sparkling diamond stud on her nose gently accent her petite facial features. As we settle into a back corner table of Linnea’s Café, I get a sense of quiet mystery and at the same time a concurrent forceful presence that is unprecedented in anyone else I’ve ever met. This girl, Weston Kilbride, who happens to be my younger sister, is an incredible up­and-coming photographer. Growing up in the same household as her has allowed me to see a side of her photos that not many get to experience. I see the mental processes that go into her photography: the thought process prior to a shoot, the visual brain that sees life in photographs, and the effect that photography has on her, not only as an artist, but as a person.

Weston is one of the most free­spirited, carefree people I have ever met. In her seventeen years of life I have never once seen her stressed, worried about what others think of her, or concerned with anyone else’s opinion. Her goal in life is to be content. It’s that simple. For this reason, when I asked if she ever considered the audience when setting up a shoot or heading out for the day to take pictures, she responded with a quick and stressed “No!” I was not surprised. She then stated, “I like the universal nature of photographs. Don’t get me wrong, I do like showing people my pictures. The pictures are personal though­what I think deserves to be photographed.” She doesn’t take pictures to show off or to even make a statement. She does it because it makes her happy, and that is her sole motivation.

With this outlook on photography it is possible to assume Weston is not passionate, but this is surely not the case. The majority of the times I am with her, her camera is around her neck just in case inspiration decides to jump out at her. The Nikon D700 DSLR means more to
her than most other material possessions—and with a talent like hers I am positive my camera would mean the world to me also. All of her work is simple yet beautiful and captures scenes that you normally wouldn’t think of as intriguing. She has a pretty modern and contemporary style but takes pictures of everything from people to plants, animals to cities, and even clothes to other random inanimate objects. Her last few photo shoots involved light manipulated black and white close ups of animals at the zoo, and seashells against varying textured backgrounds. Weston just has that artistic eye that can find beauty in almost any everyday scene, and with a love and talent like that it’s almost impossible to not be passionate.

Even though the audience is not a factor in her pictures, like it is for many other artists, a lot of thought is put into each shot. Recently, I spent a day with Weston in San Luis Obispo taking pictures. As we were walking around downtown she said, “I photograph best when I’m alone and can think and really capture what I want to. Each shot must be perfect or I’ll retake the picture hundreds of times.” I followed her and watched her work. Even after living with her for so many years I never saw her in her element, and it really was an eye opening experience. I have never witnessed her so focused or intent. She was all over the place—on her stomach on the ground, sitting in awkward angles, leaning against trees or against buildings. All I could hear was the clicking of the lens and see her scattered motions jumping around from place to place. I asked repeatedly what she was talking pictures of and the only thing she could reply with was “I’m making something unexpected beautiful.” I was completely taken aback by hearing something so simple but yet so profound come out of my younger sister’s mouth but in retrospect those five words captured what she was doing perfectly.

She notices lighting, angles, shadows, shapes, colors, outlines . . . nothing is out of the question or impossible with her camera. After a few intense hours, Weston stands up, all that previous concentrated focus gone, and walks back into Linnea’s café for some lunch. As we sit at the table we go through her pictures and I am in complete and utter awe. Every single picture. Breathtaking. There is no distinction between the lens of her camera and her eyes or brain. This girl literally sees in pictures. As I think back through the years I’ve spent with her, I can remember times on family road trips where she forced us to pull the car over in random locations so she could get out and take one quick picture. My parents always humored her but I remember feeling annoyed and frustrated, because I didn’t understand. But now, I see her and her photography in a new light. I had never in all our years felt such a strong connection to her, and being able to see her act out her passion was unbelievably rewarding and gave me a new respect for her skill.

As we chatted and ate, I brought up one of her favorite pictures “Hope.” The photograph is of a grungy wash in Downtown Los Angeles. No people are present, no major building for the eye to focus on, nothing I would have seen as photo worthy. Just a gloomy bridge, a few scattered cars, some electrical wires, various dilapidated warehouses, and a lone body of water in a part of the city overrun by industry. Uniquely, LA is Weston’s chosen place to spend the day taking pictures. According to her “It is the epitomic place to make a grungy city look so perfect. In ‘Hope’ the water is brown and the city rundown but nevertheless the scene is still amazing.” Her passion, goal of happiness, mind that captures all of day to day life in photographs, and pre-picture taking thought process, all result in something unexpected and beautiful—her goal exactly.

The unique aspect of Weston’s photography is that without her even trying or realizing it, her photographs have extremely large audiences, and in fact, do not exclude a single person. Rather, they are some of those most inclusive pieces I’ve ever seen. Since she literally sees in photographs, almost every human can identify with feelings captured in her pictures; happi-
ness, loneliness, failure, ecstasy, love. Her collections are argumentative and persuasive, deep and compelling, rhetorical and straightforward. By making the ugly beautiful, they effortlessly provide counter arguments to basic and frequent negative expressions of human nature and in return are warm, honest, true, and as stated by the title of a particular favorite, hopeful.

As my time with my sister drew to a close, we shifted our conversation more toward the effects photography have on her as a person and as an artist. Earlier in the day Weston said, “I capture moments. I don’t set them up.” This simple yet profound statement gave me insight into how she thinks about photography and what it does for her. Even though everyone that knows her thinks she could, and should, be a photographer for a living, she is still undecided. She is not sure that she wants the muck and chaos of business to get in the way of her passion. If she keeps it as a side hobby she will never have to worry about the cutthroat and competitive aspect of trying to make a living as an artist, which appeals to her. Having her “own blog or website, selling at street fairs or coffee shops, printing on t-shirts, anything casual is fine with me. I’m not into the big industry stuff.” For Weston photography isn’t art, it isn’t a statement, it isn’t a show, it isn’t to turn a profit. It is a release of energy, and a display of her own feelings created from day to day life. What she doesn’t realize is that this release of emotion is exactly what most people consider art to be—feelings visually represented for others to take notice of. But that’s what is it, and what she is. An artist.

Weston Kilbride. Young girl, big dreams of success, talent and love for photography. The mysterious quirky girl with a boiling inner passion that is a compelling and powerful way of expression. Her art effortlessly reaches all audiences without her even aiming to do so. She sees, thinks, eats, sleeps, breaths, in photographs that captivate any who take the time to look. The epitome of beauty herself, Weston strives to bring a different type of beauty to hidden aspects of daily life where you would not expect to see it. Her positive outlook and refreshing self-interest make her stand out, and can be seen in all of her pictures. Whether she believes it or not, she is, in every sense of the word, a true artist.

Taylor Kilbride is a biology major.
My Sister’s Cure
Mitchell Goulette

“Mom! I can’t stand up!” screams my sister from her room. My mom comes running upstairs and decides that we need to carry her to the car and take her to the doctor immediately. At the doctor’s office, they have no idea why she all of a sudden lost the ability to walk. This event was just another symptom added to the other unexplainable ones such as having no feeling, blurry vision, and difficulty sleeping. No doctor to this day has diagnosed my sister with a specific disease or condition, but she has began to make a recovery thanks to a new, yet still controversial treatment called human embryonic stem cell therapies. She has traveled to India twice in the past eight months to receive these treatments to help her unknown condition. Human embryonic stem cells are rapidly gaining momentum in the medical community because of the great potential they are beginning to prove in treating incurable and terminal conditions.

Because stem cells are so new and controversial, most people do not know a lot of information about them. Human embryonic stem cells come from a zygote, which is a fertilized egg. The actual stem cell is derived from the inner cell mass within the blastocyst at a stage before it implants into the uterine wall. A blastocyst is basically a zygote, just five days older, which in turn begins to develop the embryo. Due to its high degree of plasticity, human embryonic stem cells are referred to as a totipotent stem cell because it has the potential to generate all the cells and tissues that make up an embryo. Totipotency simply means that these stem cells’ potential are “total” (“Totipotent Stem Cells”). Therefore, they are capable of differentiating into almost any type of cell in the human body, which totals up to around 220 different cells. Another capability of human embryonic stem cells is that they can serve as a sort of internal repair system for many tissues and can divide essentially without limit to replenish other cells as long as the person is still alive (Goulette). Also, to use stem cells as a method of treatment, a huge number of them are required. Human embryonic stem cells can be cultured without difficulty and quickly which makes them more easily accessible for therapies.

Even though stem cells still remain under the radar to most people, it is important to know the impact they could potentially make one day in the future. Human embryonic stem cells are a new and upcoming method of treating incurable and terminal conditions; a better general understanding of what these stem cells are capable of is needed, so we can educate our fellow students and community.
There are multiple great benefits to receiving stem cell therapy for those in need of it. Due to the stem cells being unspecific cells, they can repair any type of damage done to your body. Also, once the stem cells are injected into the patient’s body, those cells will immediately begin to regenerate and renew dormant cells. Furthermore, the stem cells start to create new cells within the body, so they help jumpstart the process again to produce new, healthy cells. The understanding of how stem cells work is also immensely beneficial for human health. For example, “What researchers learn from studying how embryonic stem cells develop into heart muscle cells . . . could provide clues about what factors may be able to directly induce the heart muscle to repair itself. The cells could be used to study disease, identify new drugs, or screen drugs for toxic side effects” (“Turning Stem Cells”). Many people think the only way stem cells could benefit the human body is through injections and transplants, but that is very wrong. The possibilities of what stem cells can do are seemingly endless.

Stem cells can also be used to rebuild and repair organs. With the proper amount of research, one day organ transplants will no longer exist. This is because instead of having to take someone else’s organs, stem cell treatment will allow for organs to re-heal without ever needing surgery or other dangerous procedures. Also, large amounts of immune-system repressing drugs will not be needed because it will be your own organ.

Now, with this new medical revolution comes much controversy. Many people see a connection between abortion and stem cells because of the killing or use of a human embryo. Some of you choose to be pro-life advocates whether it be because of outside influences or your own personal beliefs, while some others are pro-choice. Generally speaking, pro-life advocates do not support stem cells while pro-choice advocates tend to either have a neutral or supportive stance on stem cells. To the people that support pro-life, I am not asking you to change your views to pro-choice. My goal is to honor your opinion and stance on abortion, but change the way in how you view human embryonic stem cells. Yes, they do have to use a human embryo, which according to other pro-life advocates is murder, but look at the benefits. So many people who have lost all hope could be given a second chance in life.

Stem cells will save many lives and it is all because of one human embryo. A common misconception is that an individual human embryo is needed for every patient who receives stem cell therapy, which is one hundred percent not true. As I have stated earlier, human embryonic stem cells are very easy to culture, and my sister’s doctor in India, Dr. Shroff, has said that the one embryo she has been working with could theoretically treat the entire human population (Goulette). Also, “it’s important to consider that any embryos used in the research are created in test tubes in a laboratory, not in a uterus. Because of this, the chance that the embryos would survive even without the researching and testing is not very good” (“Embryonic Stem Cell”). All embryos that are used for testing are either created in test tubes as said above or are surplus embryos donated by fertility clinics. These donated embryos are used with full consent. If the embryo was not used for stem cells, it would have been destroyed anyways because it was a surplus.

The reason that I am such a huge supporter and advocate of human embryonic stem cells is because of my sister. She has been to India two times now to receive stem cell therapy for the special condition she has. After receiving therapy in New Delhi from Doctor Shroff and her staff during the months of November and December in 2009, my sister walked off of the airplane returning back home. She was given the ability to walk again. My sister just returned a second time only a few days ago, and this time she has a little bit of feeling in her lower back. It has been almost three years since she had feeling in her body. The most
miraculous thing is that the doctors expect her to make a full recovery and her body to go back to completely normal. The word “normal” has not been in my family’s dictionary for as long as my sister has been sick because her condition has been anything but normal. We didn’t even fathom that it would be possible for her to make a full recovery, but these doctors believe so strongly that she will because they have confidence that the stem cells will do their job and heal her.

Many of my sister’s fellow patients in New Delhi are there due to freak accidents. One boy, who is our age, severed his spine on the first play of the first game of his senior year football career. In the blink of an eye, he became a quadriplegic. Another one of my sister’s friends was rough-housing with his siblings and ended up falling over the couch, landing directly on his neck, snapping it instantly. His life will forever be different because of a freak accident. Both of these young men have showed signs of improvement despite being told by other doctors that nothing could be done. The reason I am telling you guys about these other individuals is because it could happen to us, and God forbid if it does, wouldn’t you want to have the best and most effective treatment easily available and within the comfort of your own country?

Due to Obama passing all bills that support stem cells, they no longer have a place in politics; therefore, your voting ability will have no affect on stem cells legally. What can be done, however, is to educate. Spread the word about this marvelous and miraculous new medicine to everyone and anyone willing to listen. This will save lives and will make so many other people’s lives easier and more manageable. If you do support stem cells and help spread the word about them, you may be the turning factor in saving a life.

Mitchell Goulette is a forestry and natural resources major.

Works Cited


Editors’ Note

Victoria Phillips’s essay argues against Cal Poly’s policy that students declare a major upon admittance to the university. Phillips presents her experience with changing majors as a frame for this essay—does that experience afford her more credibility as one who can speak to this topic? What personal experiences might you consider incorporating into your argument in hopes of gaining your readers’ support? Phillips offers two main reasons against Cal Poly’s policy, and she adds evidence from outside sources to support those two reasons. From what sources does Phillips get her evidence, and as a reader how can you determine the validity of those sources? When Phillips addresses the opposition to her argument, does her tone affect the way you position yourself as a reader? Phillips’s conclusion leaves readers with an emotional appeal. Do you find that choice to be effective? Why or why not?

Writer’s Note

Throughout writing my essay, I found it easy to bring in supporting evidence such as quotations. I believe I did a good job of making the quotes flow, as well as placing the quotes in the correct places, which helped strengthen my argument. I also think that I did a good job in remembering that my audience was the Cal Poly admissions office; I did this by the way that I presented my argument. I found trying to organize how I was going to present all of my ideas challenging. I had such an abundant amount of information that it was hard at times to incorporate all my data without making my essay dry and boring.

I tried to use a lot of hypophora (The argument relies on question and answer. - eds.) because while reading political speeches and the class readings I found that I responded the best to what the person was arguing when they used hypophora. I asked my peers to take note if the body of my essay supported my thesis. I also asked them to take note of the ethos, pathos, and logos that I used and asked if they thought it was ok that I mainly used just logos to portray my argument. The advice that my group ended up giving me was mainly about how to rephrase some sentences to make them sound less awkward. I incorporated their advice throughout my paper by going back and changing sentences that they said were awkward. They also expressed to me that my use of logos wasn’t excessive and that it added to the validity of my argument. The advice that I did not use that my peers gave me was to cut out of paragraphs in order to make my argument stronger. I did not do this because I believe that every piece of evidence that I used helped contribute to an even stronger argument. My use of ethos came into affect as I explained that I am a Cal Poly student who is affected by the policy of having to declare a major prior to being accepted. My use of pathos was shown through how difficult it is to change one’s major after already being accepted to Cal Poly. And I used statistics as well as quotes to exemplify the rhetorical appeal of logos.

Major Decisions

Victoria Phillips

As a freshman at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo I have been able to experience the good and bad of Cal Poly SLO. Benefits include: amazing weather, a great location on the central coast, as well as knowledgeable and friendly professors. However, there are downfalls hidden under the wonderful exterior of Cal Poly. The major downfall is the fact that prospective students
have to choose a major prior to being accepted. With the immense pressure to pick the correct major that would prepare me for my future dreams and aspirations in the career world, I felt a huge amount of pressure my senior year of high school. As I pressed the ‘submit’ button on my application to Cal Poly with the Biology major box checked off in the lower region of the application, I thought the anxiety would come to an end; I was wrong.

As my second quarter approached I realized Biology was not right for me. Expressing my concern regarding my major to my advisor brought upon even more anxiety than choosing my major in the first place. I was told to apply to other schools because switching majors at Cal Poly can be an extremely difficult and long process. I grew angry with the system. How could the policy of choosing a major prior to acceptance be beneficial? Three words: it is not. Social as well as biological factors regarding a teenager and the influences on their judgment need to be taken into account when asking a high school senior to pick their major and furthermore their career path for the rest of their life. Cal Poly should admit students without having to declare a major prior to acceptance because of the biological and social factors that hinder teenager’s (ages 17–19) decision making skills.

Teenager’s general belief that they know everything and have their lives figured out is shown faulty as we observe the average percentage of college students that change their majors. Ron Ficek, a career counselor expresses that “66 percent of students will change their majors.” This statistic shows that the majority of college students don’t know what career path to take prior to being accepted into college. Ficek goes on to explain, “out of any group of friends about six will change their majors at least once, two will stay in their major even if they do not like it, while only one will actually be happy with their major.” A prominent pattern can be seen across the nation as large amounts of students continue to change their majors each year. These changes regarding a major cannot be blamed on indecisiveness alone. There is something other than indecisiveness that stops students from choosing the correct major; brain development.

Authors from the Journal of Adolescent Health express that, “the adolescent brain continues to mature well into the 20’s.” Therefore suggesting that when a high school senior between the ages of 17 and 19 needs to make the decision on what major to choose when applying to Cal Poly, their brains are not yet capable of making such a huge decision. A teenager’s inability to make correct decisions is because of the lack of development in the areas of the brain that control higher thinking and judgment. It can also be read in the Journal of Adolescent Health that, “the frontal lobes, home to key components of underlying “executive functions” such as planning, working memory, and impulse control are among the last areas of the brain to mature.” The parts of the brain that control planning and judgment are not developed until maybe “half way through the third decade of life,” say the authors of the Journal of Adolescent Health. The lack of decision-making skills due to brain development will put a hindrance on a prospective students decision of what major to declare upon coming to Cal Poly. Therefore, the student should not even have an option of choosing a major when applying to Cal Poly because an incoming freshman student does not have the brain development that’s necessary to make a mature and rational decision regarding their major based off of logical reasons alone.

Some may argue, “What about all the students at Cal Poly that have not had to switch their major since being admitted?” My response: they are lucky. The development of the brain does not progress at the same rate for everyone. Also, the students who have not needed to change their majors may have been more prepared for such a large decision. Confounding variables, such as the student’s experiences throughout their life may have also helped aid them in making a more logical decision regarding their major. The bottom line is that until a person’s mid 20’s, the part
of the brain regarding judgment and decision-making is not fully developed. The lack of development in the brain which involves having to choose a major prior to being accepted to Cal Poly should be thought about when forcing a student to make a decision of such magnitude. The early declaration of a major should be eradicated from the application process entirely.

Prior to going away to college, students—for the most part—have lived with and have been cared for by their parents or guardian for their entire life. Although these usually positive relationships result in learning about morals and social norms, a parent-student relationship can also influence the career path of the student. Parents play a powerful role in their student’s career choice because the student has seen how successful his or her parent(s) is/are and strive to achieve the same level of success; students then think that the only way to obtain this same level of success is to pursue the same career path as their parent(s). The authors from the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* suggest that, “a variety of familial factors such as socioeconomic status and parental occupation and employment have been identified as antecedents to career choices.” A student’s parents not only play a part in shaping the individual student’s personality and morals, but they play a key role in shaping the career path that the student believes will be most suitable for them.

It is inevitable that prospective students do not have much experience in making decisions for themselves because of the many years that their parents have helped aid in their decision-making. Students lack of experience in making decisions supports the idea that forcing a prospective student to choose a major prior to acceptance is wrong and unfair. The authors of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* suggest that: “the young adult who has had minimal experience with independent decision making (because of their parents aid in their decision making) may lack the development of a strong self-efficacy.” Without a strong self-efficacy and without the ability to make logical decisions by themselves, how are teenagers supposed to understand themselves enough in order to determine what major and career path is right for them? According to the theories presented in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, not possessing the ability to make effective decisions would make choosing the right major extremely difficult. A teenager’s lack of self-efficacy, which results because of the “minimal experience with independent decision making” that teenagers possess, should be put into consideration when enforcing the policy that a student must declare a major before acceptance.

Anyone who has been to college or any higher form of education would be quick to say that higher forms of education courses differ greatly from high school courses. The majority of incoming college freshman do not realize the new and more difficult challenges that they are going to be confronted by. Due to the ignorance of the challenges ahead, most students feel compelled to become a certain major solely based upon a great high school class or teacher that influenced them. Stephen Dahl, dean of the school of arts and sciences at St. Bonaventure University, put it nicely, “students often enter college picking a major because an influential teacher in high school got them interested in a subject. Once at college, students learn that they are not interested in this subject and change.” Students do not put into consideration that high school classes are not like college courses. Students do not realize the level of rigorousness that is demonstrated in college classes and do not realize that college courses require much more work than what would be expected in high school.

Molly Kjartanson, a freshman at Cal Poly, did not put into consideration the vast difference between high school and college classes. Kjarstanson says, “I loved my AP Biology class in high school and thought that becoming a Bio major was the right choice. But I was shocked to find how different my AP Bio class in high school was compared to my 400 person biology lecture in college.” Molly is now trying to become a political science major and “wishes [she] could have
explored more general education courses before having to pick a major.” Perspective students should be able to be admitted into Cal Poly without declaring a major and should be able to take a variety of general education classes before declaring a major because, Molly put it well, “college is a whole new ball game.”

Having an opportunity to take general education courses would allow a student to find what they are passionate about by being exposed to different material in a variety of courses. Dean Stahl also noted that, “some students switch majors because once they arrive at college they are exposed to many different areas of study.” Cal Poly’s admissions office should take note of this statement and cut the amount of students who are going to end up switching majors by allowing students to be admitted without declaring a major.

Although I believe Cal Poly should allow students to be admitted without declaring a major, it can be argued that declaring a major before being admitted into a school can be beneficial for the student. Pauline Diaz, an author of an article titled, “Should you choose a major before choosing a college?” argues that, “choosing your major early can save you time.” Diaz further explains that, “in many colleges and programs students jump right into their major courses the first term of freshman year, particularly in more rigorous majors. If you miss out on these courses, it could take longer to graduate.” Although Diaz makes a valid point about the benefits of picking a major right away, I believe Diaz has left out the consequences involved if the “rigorous” major that the student chose ended up being the wrong one for them. If this is so, then it will take the student even longer to graduate due to all the time wasted in classes for a major that the student now wants to switch out of.

Cal Poly is a polytechnic school: a technical school offering instruction in many industrial arts and applied sciences. Due to Cal Poly’s “polytechnic” title and what this title represents, Cal Poly has taken on “learn by doing” as a motto. The “learn by doing” motto exemplifies the large amount of experience that students receive in their particular career field through hands on major classes. Because of the “learn by doing” motto people may refute the idea of allowing students to be admitted into Cal Poly without choosing a major. The people refuting the idea of not declaring a major prior to acceptance might speculate that without taking four years of major courses the students would not be fully emerged in a “learn by doing” environment. But the reality is that the first two years of college need to be about discovering what one is passionate about. Therefore, the first two years of college should not consist of wasting time in a major that the student chose because of previous false speculations about what that major entails.

My own experience of choosing the wrong major when applying to Cal Poly has greatly affected my first two quarters of being a college student. I feel anxiety stricken as I wait for the day that the long process of switching majors is complete. My experience at Cal Poly thus far could have been much more enjoyable if I did not have the threat of maybe not being able to switch my major lingering in my consciousness. Cal Poly SLO is an amazing school and is looked highly upon in the academic world; I want more students to be able to be apart of this amazing student body without feeling the pressure of making the wrong decision about their major and then having to live with the consequences. The biological and social factors that influence a students decision making abilities as well as the immense pressure of having to declare a major that one is not certain of, are the main reasons why students should be able to be admitted to Cal Poly without having to declare a major. Having to miss out on a great college experience at Cal Poly SLO would be devastating, but trying to switch majors after already being accepted to Cal Poly is even more burdensome.

Victoria Phillips is a biology major.
WORKS CITED


Encountering Our Communities

The writers of the essays in this section explore their encounters with people and places in and around our California communities. For example, after studying writing in ENGL 134, Chun Hui Pek rethinks the rules of writing he was taught in high school. On the other hand, Erin Vickerman redefines her previous understanding of the local Amtgard group, while Liliana Cervantes argues that we need to do more about gang violence in California. While exploring their own previously held understandings of different communities, these authors compel us to rethink our own cultural roles. As you read, think about the ways you encounter your world and the people who inspire you to rethink your understanding of the environments you encounter.

This image offers readers a new perspective of a familiar location on campus. Do you recognize this space? Are there any visual clues to help you? Does the empty seat invite you to situate yourself within this setting? Does the title of the photograph, *and the sun came out after a week of rain*, reveal any information about this location? Next time you step into Kennedy Library, perhaps you, too, can encounter the sun from this perspective.
The vibrant colors in this photograph help convey a specific focus and tone. After examining the image, consider how a photographer selects which colors play a dominant role in the moments she captures. For instance, the stop sign is a focal point in part because of its positioning in the photo, but also because of its color. Immediately behind the stop sign, we again see the color red reinforced by the truck. Where do the colors lead your eyes next?
Editors’ Note
In Chun Hui Pek’s writer’s history essay, he discusses letting go of the five-paragraph-essay method he learned in high school. Pek states, “For every high school student, writing with this formula is a must.” What rules of writing did you learn in high school, and which of them do you still use? Did you ever break the rules? Do you want to? Furthermore, music is one motivation for Pek when he revises his essay. What inspires you to write or to revise? Pek’s new essay structure does not follow a formulaic convention; rather, the content drives the structure. How does his essay’s structure mirror his new writing process? Have you ever been encouraged to change your writing style?

Writer’s Note
“Fish Bone” was my first essay that broke the high school’s “Five Paragraph” rule, also known as the “Fish Bone.” I remember my first draft didn’t go well, but after long training in English 102, I have learned a lot of techniques about writing. So after the second final revision, my essay got a lot better. Now when I compare my second final draft to the previous draft, I can see how much I improved in my writing.

Nothing Like a Fish Bone
Chun Hui Pek

Are there any rules of writing?
For a high school student, the answer is yes. Back when I was a sophomore, I was told by our teachers that we should follow certain so-called “style-rules of writing”: we were prohibited to use “I,” “me,” or other first-person narrative, we were not allowed to put our own thoughts in our essays, and everything we put on our papers had to be based on the reading. Those were the absolute laws of the essay, which we believed and never dared to break, or we would not be able to receive good results from our paper. One of the instructions they taught us is the “Fish Bone Formula.” “If you use this formula, you will succeed in every single writing class,” they told us.

“Fish Bone,” also known as the “five paragraphs essay,” is a theory that all high school teachers teach their students about writing. The whole formula, if you draw it on a paper, looks like a fish bone: a upside-down triangle head, which represents the introduction starts from general to specific, 3 rectangle bones, which represents the 3 body paragraphs, and a right-side-up triangle tail, which represents the conclusion starts from specific to general; this is why we refer it as “Fish Bone Formula.” For every high school student, writing with this formula is a must. But once a student reaches to a higher education, those rules and formulas seem unnecessary.

Now I am in college. I was required to write an essay in my English 102 class. First, I thought it was easy; there was no difference compared to what I have written before. I sat down in front of the computer, started to brainstorm as I did millions times before when I was in high school. I planned out the thesis, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Then, I plugged in the “meat” to my “fish bone” without a second hesitation. The whole process took me no more than 1 hour to finish this essay.
Like before, I never regretted what I had written. So I moved on to the next “assignment.” I read an article in a book called *Beyond Words*. Then suddenly, I felt that something was not right. I looked back at my essay. *That's it!* For the first time, I felt unsatisfied with what I had just written. *I can do better than this boring, no-life essay,* I told myself. Suddenly, I recalled an important point about writing in my college English class.

In English 102, Professor Helmbrecht wanted us to read an article from *Fresh Voices* and “Confessions of a Former Sailor.” Those articles blew my mind: they do not follow the laws of essay, not even the “fish bone formula,” they are subjective—the authors put their own voices and ideas in their essays, and most surprisingly, the authors even use “I” in their essay, which is a taboo in our high school writing class. Professor Helmbrecht told us that she doesn’t want us to be restricted by the rules of essay; instead, she wants us to be free to express ourselves. Just like the line in “Confessions of a Former Sailor”: “Correctness, conformity to rules is a simple matter; communicating effectively to another human being is not.” Correct grammar, sentence structure, and certain rules are important, but effective communication is more important.

So I asked myself again. *Are there any rules of writing?* This time, the answer is no! I closed my door, turned on the music, and blasted it. I listened to “21 Guns” by Green Day, “New Divided” by Linkin Park, “Love Drunk” by Boy like Girl, and a couple of other songs. Then, I erased the whole essay, and started over again.

This time, I had decided not to follow the so-called “rules of the essay”: I broke the “fish bone” rule, I used “I,” and my writing was subjective—I talked about MYSELF. *Yes, this is what I want!* I had no restriction on expressing my own feelings. I felt like I was flying. At that time, I was free . . .

This essay assignment has taken me to another stage of writing; it has totally changed my writing style. Now instead of focusing on the structure and the rules, I focus on the main point I want to deliver to the reader. In the end of the essay, I gave it a title: Nothing like a Fish Bone.

*Chun Hui Pek is a software engineering major.*
Editors’ Note

In Kelsey Shimasaki’s writer’s history essay, she describes her struggles to overcome the discouraging experiences of Ms. Firestone’s freshman English class. Shimasaki decides to attend writing tutoring sessions at her high school where she learns about “showing rather than telling, revision, and incorporating details and a personal touch” into her works. How does she show rather than tell in this essay? What details does she provide, and how does she add a personal touch to this essay? What writing strategies have you learned and how do they continue to help you succeed as a writer? Shimasaki’s essay offers readers a lesson: sometimes a negative experience can push us towards improving our writing. What lessons have you gained from your past experiences as a student, and how have those lessons informed the ways you view yourself as a writer?

Becoming a Writer

Kelsey Shimasaki

“It’s okay, some people just aren’t writers.”

I narrowed my eyes in confusion. These were not the words of encouragement I was expecting to hear when I went in to see my freshman English teacher, Ms. Firestone, about the “C” I had received on my first high school essay. I watched the bright red “C” on the top of my paper blur as my eyes began to water and I fought back tears. How could she be so discouraging?

For as long as I can remember I have always enjoyed writing. Out of all the subjects in school, it was the one that came the most naturally to me. I loved being able to express myself creatively with words, whether it was through poems, short stories, or even essays for school.

Throughout junior high I had become accustomed to receiving effortless “A’s” on nearly all my writing assignments. I just stuck to the five paragraph format my teachers expected me to, and eventually essay writing became like a basic math equation. Simply start with a short introduction, add a few paragraphs worth of supporting details, top it off with a brief conclusion, and the desired product of a high score would be achieved. My consistently good grades led me to consider myself to be a pretty good writer, but my confidence began to falter after Ms. Firestone’s comment.

At first I just wanted to give up on writing. What was the point of trying to improve if my own teacher didn’t seem to believe I’d ever get much better? Each morning as I sat in class Ms. Firestone’s words would play over and over in my head like a broken record. I couldn’t concentrate and my grade in the class began to slip. Then one day, a couple of weeks after my meeting with Ms. Firestone, as I tuned out her lecture on transitions or persuasive writing or whatever it was she was droning on about, I realized that I had given into what she said. I had become someone who was not a writer. I hated Ms. Firestone for what she said to me and I didn’t want to give her the satisfaction of being correct. It took me a few minutes of searching through the hairbands, pencils, and handouts cluttering my backpack before I finally uncovered my “C” essay. I uncrumpled the paper that had been balled up and stuffed into a corner on the bottom of my backpack, smoothed it out, and placed it on my desk. Once again, my eyes were immediately drawn to the “C” at the top. But I no longer felt discouraged by the grade or even Ms. Firestone’s comment. Staring at the “C,” and its sharp, nearly pointed semicircular curve,
motivated me to improve. From that moment on I decided I would prove Ms. Firestone wrong. I was determined to do whatever it took to become the best writer I could possibly be.

After conferencing with Ms. Firestone about another essay on which I had received a “C+,” I realized that going to her for help was frustrating and pointless. Our entire meeting consisted of her drawing unidentifiable red marks on my paper. Whenever I asked how I could improve or what I should change in my essay, her response was always the same. She would point at a sentence or paragraph with her long, bright red fingernail and say, “Just look at what I circled.” I knew I was doing something wrong, otherwise my grades wouldn’t have been so low. I just didn’t know how to fix the weak points of my writing and Ms. Firestone’s suggestions were not very helpful. It didn’t take me long to realize that if I wanted to become a good writer, it was not going to be easy.

Over the next few months, I spent countless hours pounding on my keyboard as I produced one writing assignment after another. However, these writing assignments were very different from the ones I hastily wrote in junior high without putting in much thought. By attending writing tutoring sessions at my high school, I learned about the importance of skills such as showing rather than telling, revision, and incorporating details and a personal touch in my writing.

As I wrote, I’d watch the hands on the clock repeat their familiar pattern of gliding from the twelve to the six and then back to the twelve again as the hours passed by. There were nights when I would spend so much time writing or revising my papers that I would run out of time to complete my homework for other classes. Sometimes it felt like I spent more time sitting at my desk, staring at the glow of my computer screen, as the tips of my index fingers rested on the bumps of the “f” and “j” keys and I thought desperately of a topic to write about or how to phrase a certain section of an essay so that it would be perfect, than I did actually writing.

By the end of the semester, my hard work paid off and I managed to earn an “A” on my final paper. While Ms. Firestone was probably the worst teacher I ever had, I managed to learn more from being in her class than I did in a lot of my other classes. It was because of Ms. Firestone that I became a better writer. Of course, it would have been much easier if she had offered me useful suggestions rather than discouraging words, but if that had been the case I doubt I would have had so much of a desire to improve. I learned that sometimes it’s necessary to take matters into your own hands and that anything is possible with determination. Receiving a “C” didn’t mean that I was not a writer, but that I could be a better writer. Most importantly, I realized that the only way to become a good writer is by being dedicated and knowing that there is always room for improvement.

*Kelsey Shimasaki is a journalism major.*
In “Cut and Slash, Mix and Mash: Behind the Booth with DJ Mikey Lion,” Catt Hasbrook introduces us to the world of DJing. How does Hasbrook’s use of descriptive language settle us into the DJ’s world? By using quotations to create a rhetorical effect that mimics the energy and style of a professional DJ, Hasbrook creates a unique profile essay. For instance, Hasbrook has a keen ear for conversation and seeks to mimic the natural flow of her discussion with Mikey Lion in the profile. What is the effect of this rhetorical choice? Are the quotations effectively placed and integrated with Hasbrook’s own writerly voice? How are we invited to discover the ethos created by this author and her unique profile subject?

Cut and Slash, Mix and Mash: Behind the Booth with DJ Mikey Lion

Catt Hasbrook

Loud Dub-Step bass beats vibrate through the walls as Mikey Lion opens the door of his San Luis Obispo residence; headphones still around his neck, he welcomes me in with a huge smile.

“Check this out!” he shouts over the music as he strides over to his booth. Frowning at the laptop screen for a second, he clicks the mouse a few times and then twists some dials on his mixer. Instantly the music changes to a guitar-infused rock backbeat with a rap voice track over it, a seemingly strange combination at first but somehow it just works. I find myself dancing to his practice set right there in his living room. Mikey laughs and turns down the volume.

“That’s my favorite thing in the world, seeing people dance when I spin. Also, I like long surf sessions at the beach and I want to live in Berlin,” he smiles at me again, “What else would you like to know?”

San Luis Obispo based DJ Mikey “Lion” Leon has been tearing it up on the turntables for only four years. He already spins at Native Lounge almost every Sunday, a Renegade rave or large music event about once a month and frequents weekend parties all over San Luis Obispo, dropping beats that make you move your feet. But if you ask him, he’ll say he’s not into DJ-ing for the fame or the money, he simply wants everyone he’s spinning for to have an amazing night. Mikey Lion’s talent as a DJ is what landed him on top of the San Luis Obispo turntablist scene, but his attention to his audiences’ preferences and pleasure, eccentric personality and the effort that he puts into his craft are what he is truly respected for.

Mikey Lion was born and raised in Encinitas, North County San Diego. Both of his parents are alumni of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, so the decision to attend college here was an easy one for him, and an unexpected benefit to the SLO music community. Though he currently spins mostly electro and house music Mikey’s musical tastes are very diverse, probably one of the reasons he has such a talent for mixing. All his life Mikey has loved hip-hop music; it is essentially the reason he became a DJ.

“I was really into Wu-Tang Clan, Ghostface Killa and Notorious B.I.G. I used to have tons of old vinyl and back in high school and my friends and I would play them on my record player and scratch them, just messing around pretending we were DJ’s.”

Although his musical tastes have evolved tremendously, hip-hop is what first sparked Mikey’s interest in DJ-ing. He bought a set of turntables and a mixer his senior year of high school and spent most of his free time learning how to use them. There is a distinct difference
between simply backscratching a record and backscratching a record while using the volume slide so that the transitions don’t sound sloppy, all while paying attention to the tempo bar so that the beats on the two records match up. The term ‘practice makes perfect’ only applies in the DJ world when the practice aspect is applied every single day; “Learning how to spin really well is like learning how to play an instrument,” Mikey, who is still behind his booth, taps out an electronic beat on the small keyboard next to his tables, “I picked up piano this year. If I don’t integrate it into my sets every day I forget how to play it and mess up. If I think my set sounds bad I’m all, ‘Why would other people like this?’” Mikey Lion experienced this while spinning publically for the first time at a friend’s 19th birthday party.

“I just mashed old hip-hop songs all night, just scratched records classic DJ style, wiki wiki whoop,” he laughs, “I’m serious, that’s what it sounded like, it was ridiculous, I just thought ‘this is so amateur, it’s terrible,’ But at the end of the night I had so many people come up to me and tell me how awesome my set was and I was just like, ‘Maybe I should stick with this,’ and I did.” Mikey continued to practice mixing and played at numerous small events while still in high school, gaining a fan base in his home town and a better understanding of what our generation wanted to dance to.

But it was Coachella Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California, that secured not only Mikey’s love for the turntables but also opened his eyes to the fabulous genres of techno and house music. Coachella is essentially a three day concert with a lineup of about 150 alternative rock, hip-hop and electronica performances on multiple stages that are actually insane works of architectural art, held out on the edge of the Colorado Desert. Not only is Coachella a musical exhibition full of variety that will delight anyone who is lucky enough to attend, it is also the single largest gathering of live DJ performances on the west coast.

“My first time at Coachella was my senior year of high school and it was a musical epiphany. The first night I was just wandering around with my friends and we went to the stage Daft Punk was playing on; it just hit me all at once, the beat, the lights, the energy, I fell in love with techno. The DJ’s were Gods and I was converted to their practices. I’ve been to Coachella every year since then and it’s my dream to spin there someday.” Mikey’s newfound admiration for big name DJ’s inspired him to take his performances to another level, one with an actual name and audience.

Mikey Lion moved into a house on Slack Street his second year of college and his career as a DJ blasted off from there. Along with his housemates, Mikey started a weekly techno and house music dance party called “Disturb the Peace” in order to promote his DJ-ing ability and to “introduce people to legit music that wasn’t top 40 bullshit.” This, however, was an arduous task as Mikey had only recently upgraded to modern DJ equipment and was learning to use it. On top of that, “the techno scene in SLO was dead,” and other local Disk Jockeys were more prone to playing music people were familiar with, so he didn’t have much of a support network among the established party scene. However, the pressure to generate the “sickest weekday dance party in San Luis Obispo” inspired Mikey to step up his game on the tables.

But how does a college sophomore with no money and only a few connections draw the attention of Cal Poly students who already have an established party plan? How does an amateur DJ from San Diego compete with the exciting pull of downtown or draw people away from the dance parties already going on in places like Cedar Creek and Mustang, so much closer and more convenient to most residences? “I already had my tables and mixer; I’d spent the last two years learning how to beatmash on vinyl records, adding in a computer made everything so much easier. My transitions were smoother and I could mix more than two songs at once,” he
Mikey is not a fan of pop-music mashups, but had to resort to integrating well-known songs into his sets, so as not to turn people off from his performance because he was only playing music he liked. He recalls, “When I learned how to lay down a backbeat and sync tracks over it, make the bass as loud as I wanted, mix songs so that I could enjoy them too . . . I was seriously the happiest guy alive, I was like, ‘Now I have it, I’m unstoppable.’”

This truly was the case; Mikey’s weekly Slack Street peace disturbance did not go unnoticed. His house was packed every Friday night, first with techno enthusiasts but slowly his suburb spinning attracted a more mainstream college crowd and the news of his talent eventually reached the ears of older, more experienced San Luis Obispo DJ’s. Halfway through his second year, he was approached while he was spinning at a friend’s party by a representative for Mother’s Tavern with a job offer.

“He told me they wanted me. Not, ‘Come in and spin for us, we want to hear what you have,’ it was more like, ‘Are you free this Saturday? There’s a local DJ night and we want you to headline.’ It was unreal.”

As he was nineteen, Mikey actually had to sneak into his own performance. He set up his tables, mixer and computer under a banner declaring “Disturb the Peace,” his officially adopted DJ title, and “just went for it.” The bar was full of over 21 college kids and corporate representatives for DJ equipment companies like Gemini and Numark who often provide turntables and soundboards to aspiring artists. Mikey bumped Techno House music all night.

“He absolutely killed it on the tables,” Mikey’s friend Kevin aka DJ Kevlar, remembers, “still does, pretty much every time.” DJ Kevlar and Mikey Lion have been performing together since sophomore year; he landed Mikey a spot at Native Lounge for the first time, a venue he now spins at weekly.

“I ‘pretty much’ kill it?” Mikey laughs, “Thanks for dropping off my speakers dude, how sick was that club we spun at on Saturday? Almost reminded me of Berlin . . .” Mikey studied abroad in Spain the Fall Quarter of his third year, after a summer of spinning at clubs and raves throughout San Luis Obispo. Once in Spain, Mikey’s first instinct was to check out the European club scene.

“Barcelona is amazing, I loved studying there, I loved partying there . . . clubs are open from 10 at night until 9 in the morning and the music is incredible. Before I went to Europe I was mostly into hard electro music but I stepped into the first club and it was like my musical knowledge exploded. I just started downloading all the new stuff I was hearing and played with it a little, and then one morning when the club was just closing down I stumble up to the house DJ and ask him to let me spin a song, and the people there are so honestly so laid back and just want to party so he says yes and I start spinning. When I’m done he’s standing there just looking at me and says, ‘I like you. You’re different. How long are you here for?’ and I tell him ‘As long as you want me to be.’ I started spinning there once a week for the next three months.”

The club was Razzmatazz, and it was where Mikey recorded his hour long set “Barcelona” as a promo track for the club’s website. The set is infused with Mikey’s signature long transitions and a heavy bass line. Transitions are “like a DJ’s heartbeat. Yeah, you can just spin songs and switch them back and forth with the crossfader, but if you don’t have a heartbeat your song is going to die. I try and create a heartbeat for my sets, and I know it’s successful when it matches up with the heartbeat of my audience, the way they move.” His use of self-created acapella sections in “Barcelona,” along with his use of a style called Tribal Funk, which is essentially digitally edited tribal drum beats, is innovative and gives the set a very Latin sound. American trance and techno relies largely on hard disk scratches and super heavy bass beats with a lot of repetition,
as well as upping the beats per minute to something around 135. Mikey breaks free from this style by varying his bass beats and the tempo of his music throughout the set.

Whilst in Europe, he also spun at various clubs in Girona and Costa Brava, Spain. Mikey also traveled to Berlin, which he calls “the techno party capital of the world.” While there he experienced the top European DJ’s spinning at Berlin’s famous Club Bergheim from “3am to 11am, non-stop. They had to have been on so many drugs,” and witnessed DJ techniques he had never seen before. Mikey is completely self-taught and all his transitions, different types of scratches and ingenious use of the crossfader, the slide on the bottom of the mixer which is used to switch back and forth between records, were learned through “pushing to the front of the crowd and watching the DJ, matching his movements to the sounds I was hearing then going home and spinning all night, trying to imitate them.” By integrating the European DJ style into his American electro sets Mikey was able to fuse not only music but cultures, creating a fresh new style that was unique to him.

Mikey received positive feedback from all the audiences he spun for in Europe and returned to California as DJ Mikey Lion, with a whole new set of skills. He began spinning his new European techno tracks along with American dub-step and hard electro; This innovative new style caught the attention of Cooper Hadaway, the head of the Renegade Rave movement, as well as the music coordinators at Native Lounge. Within the next few weeks Mikey had a two-hour set window every week at Native and has spun at every Renegade rave since their creation in the summer of 2009, and each time he spins the venue is packed.

Mikey’s musical aptitude has opened the minds of many San Luis Obispo college students to techno and house music and through his efforts and the efforts of the people he has inspired, the SLO techno scene has been brought back to life. San Luis Obispo will be losing a great asset to the party and music scene when DJ Mikey Lion takes his tables to Berlin for good in the fall, and even he is hesitant about leaving his lifestyle as an accomplished DJ in California behind. But as he says “It’s better to regret something you did do than wonder forever about something you didn’t, so I’m going. But I know I have to make it, that’s what I did here and it’s what I’m going to accomplish over there.” Mikey’s innovative style and passion for his art have helped inspire a whole new kind of entertainment in San Luis Obispo and continues to introduce hundreds of college students to amazing music that you won’t hear on the radio.

*CATT HASBROOK is a wine and viticulture major.*
**Editors’ Note**

In Erin Vickerman’s profile essay, she explores the world of Amtgard. She not only interviews one of the members, she also participates in one of their games. How does her involvement with Amtgard increase her credibility as an author (her ethos)? After reading the essay, does your understanding of Amtgard and its members change? Throughout her essay, Vickerman comments about the acceptance felt between Amtgard members; for example, she writes, “Because of Amtgard, Cronin has made many new friends who don’t judge him as a nerd like his peers at school tend to.” However, in her conclusion, she narrates a scene in which friends who are watching her play laugh at her. How does her language in this section show her audience how she feels—is anything unexpected revealed?

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**Amtgard**

*Erin Vickerman*

I stand behind the thin, white rope carefully placed in a rectangular shape on the lush, green grass. As I glare at the enemy standing across the field, I remind myself, a shot to the torso, dead, the amputation of two limbs, dead. Don’t touch the ball. I have a three-foot grey, foam sword clenched in my right hand and a bulky, black shield covering the left side of my body. As I look to my left there are three large men standing in homemade wool robes with black, plastic guards protecting their legs; they have clenched jaws, their knees are bent, and they are ready to charge at any moment. I look back down at my worn brown leather cowboy boots, jean shorts and flowing yellow tank top; I feel exposed. The whistle is blown and everyone charges towards the red rubber ball placed in the center of the field. Being a newbie, I jog slightly behind Griffin, a member of the Seven Sleeping Dragons, who whacks the ball with his sword. The ball slams into his opponent’s leg. His enemy is now dead. The battle has begun.

Michael Bosio looks like your somewhat geeky college student. He awkwardly stands lanky and tall, with a short brown buzz cut, almond eyes, and a slightly crooked nose. He takes classes at Cuesta College, and works a part-time job downtown. On Saturday afternoons, around 1:00 pm, Michael takes on a new persona; he is Cronin, Baron of the Seven Sleeping Dragons, a small sector of the Dragonspine Kingdom in a game called Amtgard. Amtgard is a Medieval-based combat system that focuses on battle. The game was established in El Paso, TX by James H. Harren II in 1983, and it quickly spread all over the United States thereafter (AmtWiki). Cronin has been an active member of Amtgard for over 2 years; he said, “I heard about Amtgard at a LAN (local area network) party. I know it all sounds a bit nerdy but I’ve met a lot of interesting people and immediately found a new enjoyable hobby.” In the “world of Amtgard,” social class has no importance; the entire purpose of the mock combat is based on striving to do your personal best and to find pleasure in fighting. Because of Amtgard, Cronin has made many new friends who don’t judge him as a nerd as his peers at school tend to.

We live in a materialistic society where many of us learn from a very young age that success is growing up, going to college, and getting a high paying job in order to fulfill our duties as adults. Our jobs, homes, cars, even cell phones define our social class and the types of people we relate ourselves to. Peer pressure from age 5 to 45 defines the activities we pursue in our
free time. Watching a 37 year-old grown man fighting whacking a 14-year-old boy with a foam sword in Santa Rosa Park on a Saturday doesn’t really fit society’s social standards. But does it matter? Should grown men and women care about how others judge what they do in their free time, or should they just forget about the social norm and do something they enjoy? Until I personally tried Amtgard, I thought it was ridiculous that adults were dressing up in robes and pretending to fight.

When I would drive by Santa Rosa Park and watch these people playing dress up and pretending to kill one another in public I had a preconceived notion that they had to hide behind a fantasy because their own lives were so pathetic like the people in the movie *Role Models*. I immediately judged Amtgardians as being childish and nerdy. I thought fake sword fighting in a made up world was something that people should grow out of by the time they turned 12. But after speaking with these people and testing out the game myself, I learned that Amtgard is nothing like L.A.R.P. (Live Action Role Playing) is in the movie. Amtgard is solely based on Medieval-style fighting, whereas L.A.R.P. is based all on people in fake countries fighting to be crowned king; social class is so important that everyone must speak in Medieval English and bow to the King when he walks by. L.A.R.P. is even more of a social hierarchy than our own cruel world; the only difference is that everyone strives to become the “geekiest of the geeks” instead of models, singers or actors. Amtgard isn’t an escape from reality, it is just a hobby. It’s an activity where people can enjoy themselves and the company of others. Being cool, rich, and smart doesn’t matter. The players’ only goal is to whack the rubber ball as far as possible before they get killed by their challengers.

A game they play in Amtgard is actually very simple. Two teams of about six to eight people each are divided based on the types of weapons each player is carrying. A player can hold a sword, a dagger, a shield, or a pole arm. Each team then goes to either end of the field, the boundaries shown with rope. A rubber ball is placed in the center of the field. The goal is to get the ball past your opponent’s end of the field. Only the weapons can touch the ball otherwise you die. You can also die if a weapon cuts off two different limbs, or hit your torso. It is very fast paced, but also amusing. Anyone, including myself, can easily spend hours playing without getting bored.

Cronin stated “I may not be cool. I enjoy sword fighting, and playing World of Warcraft, but I have fun; the people I play Amtgard with do too and that’s really what it is all about. People my age like to get drunk and go to parties, I like to sword fight . . .” It isn’t quite the most popular activity for people their age, but they do it because they find enjoyment out of it all. Amtgard is nothing more than a hobby.

I stand face to face with a college age student; he is hunched low to the ground, his small white shield covering his left shoulder, and his red foam dagger is ready to make swift motions at any second. I look at my feet for a moment, realizing the white rope is lying no more than three inches from my right boot; I can’t step out of bounds. I look up and strike his left leg with my sword, he falls to the ground. I cut off his leg! Out of excitement I lose concentration and he strikes my left arm, once hidden behind a shield. I throw the shield out of bounds, and I place my arm behind my back. A car full of college age boys drives by with B.o.B blasting from their speakers, they shout “LARP!!!” out the window, but it doesn’t faze me. The adrenaline is pumping through my body; nothing can stop me from killing my opponent. As he attempts to thrust towards my legs I strike him in the back of the shoulder. I killed someone! I lift up my hands in pure joy! I look over at my friends Rachel and Jacy watching me from Rachel’s bright
yellow jeep parked in the parking lot. They sit in the car laughing hysterically as a 14-year-old boy hits me in the stomach with his sword. I die.

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WORK CITED

Music Education: A Gift to California Public Schools

Olivia Cercone

Plato once said, “Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything,” and coming from a great philosopher like Plato, it proves music is more than just sound. Throughout time, dating back to 1100 BC when the first forms of music were documented, music has had the ability to be powerful, influential, and inspiring. The root of music for each human comes from education. Our society subconsciously starts educating our youth in music from day one, birth, by simply having the sound of song in the background of everyday life. Music education is proven to have a positive effect on a child. Whether it be the early practice of the choir or the first blow into a flute, music education is a fun and beneficial subject for young kids. Unfortunately, because the California state’s budget is reducing $2 Billion out of education, state public schools are cutting music programs out of their system’s budget, depriving willing students the ability to learn and make music (Knutson). Music programs should not be taken away from the students of California public schools because it provides valuable benefits in both academic life and greater society.

Music education and academic success go hand in hand. Many people, unaware of the benefits of music education, argue that supporting music programs in school is a waste of time and that school funds should be put toward more quantitative subjects such as math, science, and English. However, studies show that this argument is false and that music education is extremely
beneficial to a child’s academic performance. For instance, in a 1997 study conducted by Peter Wood of The Comparative Academic Abilities of Students in Education and in Other Areas of a Multi-focus University, elementary students in arts-based programs, such as music, concluded that students’ math test scores rose as their time in arts education classes increased. This is evidence that ongoing music programs throughout grade levels can only benefit children in their learning process, test taking skills, and overall achievement in mathematics (Wood). In addition to mathematics, music students excel in the English department as well. According to a study conducted by the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Council on the Arts, students involved in music were found to score higher on their reading, writing, and science than those students who do not participate in music, proving that a student’s involvement in music and success in reading and literature corresponded positively (Fehr). However, music students will not achieve this academic success unless they approach learning with a positive attitude.

Involvement in music not only promotes outstanding test scores but also fosters a positive and cooperative attitude toward learning. Although this may seem unlikely, suddenly having a sense of cooperation and a positive attitude just from playing music, it is true. Studies show students were found to be more optimistic about learning and excited to connect with peers when arriving at school. According to study project directors, Pamela Aschbacher and Joan L. Herman, for the 1991 UCLA Humanities Program, students in schools with arts-focused curriculums reported significantly more positive perceptions about their academic abilities than students in a comparison group (Aschbacher and Herman, 2002). Working in a classroom with twenty students all listening silently to a lecture is very different than sitting in a music room with fifty students all working with each other to put together a musical puzzle. Having to be aware of other student’s instruments and personal parts in music forces the individual to be more aware, focused, and cooperative with their peers. Aschbacher and Herman’s study supports the idea that working together to create a musical masterpiece can force a sense of cooperation and positive attitude toward the task.

Where there is cooperation and positive attitude, there is discipline. To work together with a large group of loud, energetic students, one has to know how to keep him or herself together. Fortunately, according to the American Music Conference of 2000, 73% of respondents agree that teens that play a musical instrument are less likely to have discipline problems and can more easily conduct themselves properly and cooperate with peers more easily (American Music Conference, 2000). That being said, in a 1999 Columbia University Study, “students in the arts were found to be more cooperative with teachers and peers, more self-confident, and better able to express their ideas,” all of which support the fact that music helps for healthy and happy learning (Arts Education Partnership). As shown so far, academics and attitude go hand in hand as well by helping a student create a positive atmosphere and a comfortable learning space.

With academic success, positive attitudes, and cooperation, music benefits other parts of society, such as the workplace. One can argue it is pointless because he or she cannot see a direct connection between the job market and economic benefits to music participation and programs. Since very few individuals go into music-based careers, the connection between music involvement and economic benefit is not obvious. However, according to Newsweek journalist, Sharon Begley, the part of the brain responsible for planning, foresight, and coordination is substantially larger for instrumental musicians than the general public, all of which are key elements in the work force (Begley). Whether it may be planning for an engineer, foresight for a police officer, or coordination for a Safeway checking clerk, all three elements Begley mentioned are important in sustaining a proper work environment. Based on Grant Veneable’s
study, “The Case for Sequential Music Education in the Core Curriculum of the Public Schools,” it’s unsurprising that “a majority of the engineers and technical designers in Silicon Valley are also practicing musicians” (Venerable). The use of an instrument and reading music can help students with good rhythmic ability, thus making it easier to detect and differentiate between patterns in math, music, science, and the visual arts, which are all characteristics of the work force (Professional Resource Center, 2000). Each technical detail of musicianship in children and adults carry out to the benefits in academics, positive and cooperative attitudes, and even extends to the work force.

In addition to the many benefits of music, the connection a student acquires with the instructor and with peers in a music class is stronger than most other academic subjects. The bonds students make with each other and with their teacher through music programs are irreplaceable. With peers, such as a partner in a duo or a stand partner, music students all share the common interest of making music, which helps support a solid connection. As well as forming this connection with peers, a music student can form a connection with their instructor. In fact, according to the Journal of Research in Music Education, “more music teachers are role models for students than teachers of any other subject. 36% of surveyed students identified music teachers as their role models, compared to 28% for English teachers, 11% for elementary teachers, and 7% for physical education teachers,” and I, too, can vouch for this (D.L. Hammon and L.M. Walker, 1993). My high school band instructor, Mr. Handley, helped me through my high school career by motivating me, inspiring me, and believing in me, as he did for every student. A music teacher is more than an instructor; they are a friend, mentor, and role model. Music education helps students connect with adults, such as their teachers, better, and help them create a strong connection. This connection corresponds to academics, willingness to participate in school, and the work force. Sharing a bond with an instructor can influence the student to want to come to school, learn, and participate.

The recent budget cuts on California public schools will negatively affect their student’s advancement in education. The importance of music education on children is grossly overlooked by public school systems. When the school board does not take into consideration that music benefits a child academically as well as in greater society, they lose the foundation to a student’s well-rounded future. Test scores show it, attitude and cooperation show it, and the work force shows it—music education affects not only a child’s scholastic career, but also his or her future. It is wrong to take funds away from public school music programs; however, it is more wrong to be taking away funds for education as a whole. The California state budget cuts focused on specific targets in the economy, education being one of those targeted. Funds taken out of music education as well as general education will only negatively affect a child’s life as well as California’s future as a state. A child’s education is like a seed, when it is planted, it can grow. If the government takes away this seed, California will not grow. Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” and that is the weapon every child should own.

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WORKS CITED


Save Their Lives, Save Their Futures

Liliana Cervantes

Marco Reyes did not even turn twenty before a bullet, not intended for him, took his life. He is just one of many who has fallen victim to this endless, violent, abrupt crime. If his brother had not been a gang member, he would not have had problems with rivaling gangs. If Marco had not been around that lifestyle, around those types of people, none of this would have occurred; no innocent life would have been lost. Unfortunately Marco was around all this; it was his only option with no way out. Many adolescents seem to be born into this sad lifestyle and do not see an alternative. To them, becoming something more then just a gang member is surviving through all the violence and gaining respect. They strive to be one of the big guys who is feared and greatly respected. Violence is a major contributor to deaths amongst teens, even more if gang related. The 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment reports that 58 percent of state and local law enforcement agencies reported active criminal gangs in their jurisdictions in 2008 compared with 45 percent of state and local agencies in 2004 and 80 percent of the crime activity committed in the communities is by gangs (iii). Instead of going to school and receiving an education, these kids are out “hustling” in the streets, committing crimes, are involved in theft, auto theft, assaults, and even tragic murders. If only they had a place to go where they can actually improve themselves and not worsen themselves as they do in prison. A place where they realize that the gang life is not the one they want to live. Somewhere where
they can get help to get back on their feet, go to school, get a job, have many people who care around them to listen and guide them to prepare them to become something more than a delinquent. The community, as well as the state, should be more concerned about finding ways to help our youth and keep them away from such brutal violence.

Gangs are seen as a second family by teens. The attorney general of the Crime and Violence Prevention Center, Daniel E. Lungren, explains teens receive the support and attention from gangs that they were and are deprived of while growing up (12). When a child is not being cared for or shown love, compassion, or support, they feel the need to rebel and get it elsewhere. It is more common for a child in a less fortunate family to be attracted to the gang lifestyle. The gang then poses as a second family and claims they will not leave anyone behind. When they are not doing well in school or feel they do not fit in with their peers, they turn to gangs. They feel they have more in common with that type of crowd then with their peers at school. When they commit a crime for initiation or get jumped in by the gang, the members then show respect and support to the new member.

Gangs emit an image of status, respect, control, hierarchy, protection, and reputation that teens desire to be a part of to feel “accepted” in our society. What they don’t realize at the moment is the danger that gangs bring and the self-destruction they will undergo the moment they become a member of a gang. According to Lungren, teens not only endanger themselves but also the loved ones surrounding them, the people who live in their neighborhoods, or whoever is around them as they step outside onto the streets (6–8). Innocent people become targets to unnecessary violent crimes committed by gang members. They do not care if their neighbor or the seven year old girl or even if their friend’s mother gets shot by an intended bullet that was for them. “A rival gang sometimes identifies everyone in the neighborhood as a potential threat . . . in this way, innocent residents are often subjected to gang violence (Lungren 8). Just by living in a place where gangs exist, the people of the community have a higher risk to be innocent bystanders who fall victims to criminal activity. Lungren argues that the community should no longer ignore the presence gangs. They have spread throughout California from rural to suburban areas. More people are being at risk, so the community should work together and get involved to prevent violence (Lungren general message). This was said in 1994 in a Community Response pamphlet. There has been a rise of criminal activity committed by gangs since then. The FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Reports shows that the percentage of all gang related homicides in 1994 was 5.7 which rose to 6.9 in 2002 and all the gang related homicides with firearms in 1994 was 7.5 which rose to 9.9 in 2002 (2). If prevention is the key in controlling gangs then why has not much improved since the prevention, interventions, and suppression programs were put into motion (Lungren 1)?

The problem with the youth these days is they have little self-desire to do or be involved in organizations, clubs, sports, or activities that are not emphasized by the media or fad. They will not do anything or commit to anything if it is not mandatory to do so. They will more likely finish a project or go to church if they are being compensated in the end. Teens hardly do anything out of their own good will or because of desire for self-improvement. In the end, having these optional programs to prevent youth from joining gangs or preventing gang violence are useless. Many gang members prefer to be incarcerated then to participate in such programs when given the option in court. The senior policy associate for juvenile justice, Lynn White believes “the over-incarceration of youth is one of the major crises facing our communities” and wants to see “policy shift the paradigm to focus on prevention, not incarceration” (qtd. in Leftwich par. 3). In prison, youth learn more and become more involved with criminal gang
activity because prison gangs run the street gangs. Adolescents are not taking the incarceration sentences as punishments; instead, they are gaining reputation and status.

My solution is to have mandatory intervention programs that house adolescents profiled and enlisted as gang members by local police departments. These programs can be funded in many ways; by having celebrities or corporation as sponsors, using the money that was used to house gang members in jail to pay for the housing of adolescent gang members, and widespread of fundraiser and throughout California. A newspaper article written by Steve Gravelle says the approximate cost to house a juvenile in jail is 235 dollars a day (par. 18). Teens will be obligated to live in a home where they will be with other gang members receiving help from law enforcement, lawyers, teachers, mentors, psychiatrists, and previous gang members. Time Magazine reported McMansions being stuck on the housing markets because of their immense size (Kiviat par.1). Government officials could use these homes to house the youth and begin their intervention. Many of these homes are being used to house autistic adults; why not try to help our youth to save themselves. Lawmaker Bobby Scott, “introduced legislation that aims to rehabilitate youth rather than incarcerate them” (qtd. in Leftwich par. 4). Passing this legislation will put forth the intervention programs. Placing gang members in these homes and undergoing the interventions will help them change their perspectives on life, school, future, and family. They will recognize the danger they face by being in a gang and the risks they set for the neighborhoods, families, friends, and peers.

It is obvious by the statistics above that violence committed by gangs as increased over the years. Prevention programs have not been enough to cut the rates of homicides, burglaries, auto theft, etc. Teens are not interested in seeking help, therefore the community, parents, teachers, law enforcement, local officials, and government should be more concerned in wanting to help our future generation. They are our future teachers, scientists, doctors, and presidents. Why are we not anxious on doing anything to save the potential these children hold? Forcing them into gangs, forcing them into the jail systems is just corrupting their lives. Why not force them into a positive environment where they will want to change. To stop the violence, we all need to want to intervene.

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**Annotated Bibliography**


This article is about the number of inmates in the jail system. It says they are low offenders who go to jail who should not be there because then they mixed with high-level offenders. Some juvenile detention centers want to keep youth away from those high-level offenders. It gives two solutions to not incarcerating low-level offenders: serving time on weekends or house arrest.

I chose this article because it gave me the information I needed to prove it cost a lot of money to house a juvenile in jail. That money could be going to a better program that can work more towards helping the youth.


McMansions are not finding to be what house buyers are looking for. They are beautiful homes about 4,000 to 6,000 square feet big. Many people around the world are dwelling on ideas with the
uses these houses can emit. In San Diego some McMansions are being used to house autistic adults and others to film movies. Some think the houses are too large and cause families to separate. Some potential buyers in Australia actually want to destroy and rebuild these homes into two. In Ohio a group wants to use some as greenhouses. These houses are also thought to be great to teach life lessons such as laundry and cooking.

This article gave me the idea of using these homes for intervention programs for gang members. Almost in all houses, each bedroom has its own bathroom; depending on the number of rooms in the house, adolescents that are involved in gangs can be housed there to begin their intervention program. They will be living in a small group with a group of adults who will be helping them throughout the process. The money to buy such homes and fund the intervention programs can be fundraised and sponsored through by a celebrity who really wants to help stop all the violence these younger generations are falling victims to. All the money that will be saved by not incarcerating the gang members to jail can also be used towards the programs.


This article is about the Children’s Defense Fund and representatives wanting to help gang members with prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies. They want to lower the adult offenses adolescents are charged with. They would rather rehabilitate youth instead of giving them jail time. They speak of a bill called the youth Promise Act proposed by Bobby Scott to help gang members.

I chose to use this article because I also feel incarcerating young gang members is not a good idea. Many teens that leave jail come out worse then how they were before they went to jail.


This book tells what a gang is, what they do, the prevention and interventions programs that are available, anti-gang laws. Gangs are involved in criminal activity, homicides, drive-by shootings, drugs, theft, and much more. It is stated that community members and local government officials should be more involved in trying to prevent gang violence. They should learn to identify the gang affiliation and from there start to take action in stopping the violence. When they commit an act, a lot of innocent people fall victims. It speaks greatly on how parents can prevent gang affiliation when their children are young. They can be put in before or after school programs, education on gang prevention programs, employment opportunities, and community and law enforcement programs. The anti-gang laws are harsher punishments if you are identified as a gang member, commit a crime, commit a murder, commit auto theft, possession of arms or drugs, etc; misdemeanor or felonies depending on active participation in a gang and the use of coerce to participate in a gang.

This source talks a lot about prevention. Really prevention only helps in the early signs when the adolescents are young. Once already in a gang they will have no respect for a parent or guardian and do as they wish. They will not voluntarily go to these prevention programs or change their minds of dropping out of a gang unless they have a miraculous life changing experience. They feed of intimidation, power, money, drugs, and reputation. I feel prevention programs will not help in stopping gang violence so more should be done to intervene. These gang members should be put into mandatory intervention programs to help the youth in our generation. All those prevention programs and the numbers are still rising. Prevention is not enough.

This article is mostly statistics on gang violence committed since 1993 through 2003. It shows percentages in crimes such as rapes/sexual assaults, homicides, homicides with weapons, robbery, aggravated assaults, etc. It has information on the different percentages of victims reporting their assaults or violent acts being committed by Hispanic or non-Hispanic gang members.

I used this source because it had statistics that supported my claim of crimes committed by gangs has risen since 1994.


This assessment is on the data analyzed by 2008 National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) data, and the Department of National Gang Intelligence Center about the threats gangs place on communities. It has statistics of how many active gangs and gang members, violence and crimes committed by gangs the type of gangs, regions where most gangs are found, and strategic objectives to decrease the threats.

I used this assessment because it was by the FBI and it supported my theory of the rise of gangs and gang members in the United States over the years.
Pedal

Calvin Joyce

Cruising down the streets of San Luis Obispo on my bike with a group of elementary school friends was the best sensation in the world. We would always cherish the opportunity to ride bikes down to the local Taco Bell for lunch. Experiencing the wind howl past my face gave me a feeling of independence. What happened to these emotions? Today most of us consider having to get somewhere on a bicycle to be a burden. When I turned 16, it was all about cars, cars, cars. I found a sense of freedom and security behind the black leather steering wheel of my green 1997 Accord. I could go wherever I wanted at whatever speed my foot desired. I forgot that this same sense of freedom and security can be experienced while pedaling a bicycle. As a freshman at Cal Poly, I decided to get around town using road bicycle. I currently have a job and am able to get everywhere I need to in an efficient manner. I am glad I made this decision and believe that if you decide to do the same next year, you too will benefit greatly. Although it may be a sacrifice of convenience, leaving your car at home and using your bicycle for transportation will save you time and money.

Problems that arise when getting around town on a bike are weather, luggage, and long distance transportation. These can all be solved by using public transportation or by getting rides from friends. The weather is not a major factor in San Luis Obispo because it rains only 29 days per year on average (“San Luis Obispo, California”). No one wants to be on a bicycle while it is raining and they should not have to. For these rare cases, you will have to use the bus system. Cal Poly students are privileged to be provided with free bus access by using their Poly ID Card, and though it may take longer than driving or riding a bicycle, it is a great way to save money. On beautiful days when you are dying to get to the beach, ask a friend with a car if he or she would want to drive to the beach. If this fails, then the Poly Canyon Pool is always a great alternative. Some of you may consider the loads that you transport to be too heavy for a bicycle. I know from experience that this is false. Everything you need to carry to classes and throughout the day should fit in your backpack. If you really need more space, then you can purchase a basket that attaches to your bike from any local bicycle shop for about $15. Traveling home may take more time and be harder to plan, but as you will soon be able to tell, it is all worth keeping the car at home.

Now that these minor issues are dealt with, I want you to understand exactly how much money bike transportation saves you. You will save money for gas, maintenance, and parking.
When thinking about costs, you must consider the cost of a parking pass along with the money you spend on gas. You also need to take into account the cost for maintenance of things that may go wrong during the school year. Tyler Sewell, a freshman at Cal Poly said, “I spend about $25 per month on gas.” Also during the school year he had to replace a broken fuel pump ($800) and a broken thermostat ($300). The average cost for car insurance is $1,566 so I will use $1,500 to make the math easier (“Auto Insurance Answers”). Over the span of the school year Tyler spent $3,800 on his parking pass, fuel, maintenance, and insurance collectively. Erik Holliday—also a freshman at Cal Poly—spent $800 this year on maintenance including a patched tire, door handle repair, and transmission repair. Over the eight month span of school Eric spent $320 on gas. The gas, parking, maintenance and insurance cost totals up to about $3,600. These numbers alone demonstrate that you will be saving a substantial amount of money by leaving your car at home.

The only reason left for students to bring their cars is because it will save time, but I have concluded that this is false. In college I always feel as if I need more time to work on homework and hang out with friends, so why would I want to ride my bicycle and waste this precious time of mine? In fact I would not be wasting time. Living in Poly Canyon Village, the places that will be necessary to get to are grocery stores and downtown. You will need to buy your own food because you have your own kitchen to cook in and the closest grocery store to you is Albertson's. Let's look at the time it will take to drive there versus riding a bicycle. According to Google Maps, it takes six minutes to get to Albertson’s in a car and seven minutes on a bicycle. This may sound like a short amount of time for a bicycle ride, but it is pretty close to true. I would estimate it would take ten minutes for me to get there. Even so, Google Maps does not take into account how long it will take to find your keys, walk to your car, and find a parking spot. I will let you estimate how long this will take for yourself, but for me these three steps combined will take 6 minutes on average. Commuting downtown for food and shopping necessities will also be important for you next year. Google Maps states that it will take 8 minutes by car and 11 on a bicycle to commute downtown to the Fremont Theater. This difference in time can also be easily neglected because it is very hard to find a parking spot downtown. It is such a relief to have parking right in front of your destination. The amount of time you will save by using a bike is definitely worthwhile. The majority of people believe traveling by bicycle will waste too much time, but this is not true. It takes nearly the same amount of time, if not less. Erik Holliday enjoys having his car, but also says, “Dealing with the car hassle-wise is kind of inconvenient.” He claims he spends a significant amount of time taking his car into repair shops and waiting for them to diagnose and fix problems with his car. Therefore time constraints should not be what is keeping you from using a bike as transportation.

A difficulty with this mode of transportation is that it is dangerous. Bicycling does come with its risks. Bicycle fatalities are 11 times higher than car fatalities (Voildand). However, pedestrian fatalities are three times as high as bike fatalities so this adds perspective to the statistics. Bike accidents can be easily avoided with knowledge about the roads and proper equipment. Some of the main things to do to avoid getting hurt are to: wear a helmet; avoid busy streets; make sure cars can see you well; ride in the bicycle lane with traffic; and obey the rules of the road. If you follow these basic guidelines, then you will be much less likely to get in an accident.

Now that you have all the necessary information, reconsider why you want to bring your car to school next year, and whether your reason is legitimate or not. If you do not own a bicycle, look on Craigslist for a used bike. A bike that will be good for college will cost you somewhere
from $50 to $150 (“Bicycles”). I hope you realize that the benefits of leaving your car at home greatly outweigh the hassles. This money that you save can now be used for extra college activities or to save up for your education. Joining a fraternity, going on more club trips, and eating out more often are all possible because you will save so much money. I realize that this is a big decision to make, but I am sure that you can do it because I was in the same position as you. Commute by bike next year, and I am sure that you will experience the same feeling of freedom and peace that I do now, and we all did as kids.

_Calvin Joyce is a civil engineering major._

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Much Needed Improvements to Cal Poly Dining

Eileen Wu

What would you do if you found $1,446 in your pocket? Would you go on a shopping spree? Would you donate it to charity? Or would you use it to fund your college tuition? With that amount of money, you could almost pay a whole quarter’s worth of tuition at many universities. At Cal Poly, students pay from $1,996 to $2,066 (depending on their college) per quarter for their education, while they spend $1,446 for the campus dining. That is only $560 to $620 less! While most would hope if they were paying almost the equivalent amount of their tuition on their meal plan, they would be receiving a quality dining plan; however at Cal Poly, that is not the case.

Before arriving at Cal Poly, I expected quality college dining. Nutritious and balanced meals to help me avoid the freshman 15, an all-you-can-eat buffet at the swipe of a card, and a variety of dining halls I could eat at. I was rather disappointed. While those are common dining-hall ways of any other university, Cal Poly dining decided to be different. From the fixed-priced meal plans to the unhealthy choices students barely have to choose from, something must change.

At Cal Poly, students are required to immediately choose a dining plan after accepting their offer. If first-year students are to live on campus, they must eat on campus. Freshmen are given two main options: dining plans for the residence halls or dining plans for the on-campus apartments. Depending on each student’s living situation, they must choose accordingly. If students live in the residence halls, they have three plans to choose from: Freedom, Flexibility, and Value, which vary between the amount of given meals per week and Plu$ dollars per quarter. However, if the freshmen live in the Cerro Vista apartments, they are required to buy the Apartment Life dining plan, which gives students only 8 meals per week and 200 Plu$ dollars per quarter. With these dining plans, freshmen are limited to only a certain number of meals per week and if they buy an amount over the fixed price, the remaining money is charged to their Plu$ dollars account. Plu$ dollars are pre-paid money equivalent to their worth, which are only useable on campus. However, a main issue with the Apartment Life dining plan is the limited amount of Plu$ dollars involved. How are students expected to buy groceries for their apartments with their Plu$ dollars when there are barely enough to buy meals for the week? Are students expected to starve if they run out of meal credits and Plu$ dollars towards the end of the quarter?
The dining plan at Cal Poly is the first issue that must be changed. From the fixed-priced meals, to the expensive costs, and the lack of rollover meals between weeks, the dining system is flawed. First, there are too many expensive entrees amongst campus dining. The majority of the time, students fail to realize that they are being cheated of their money because they use their meal plans to pay for it. However, with the overpricing of certain a la carte items on each menu at eateries that do not accept the meal plan, students are forced to spend more than necessary Plu$ dollars on simple foods. Jeff Lewis, a columnist for the Mustang Daily gives examples of overpriced items, such as “bananas at The Avenue are sold at over four times the price of the same banana at Trader Joe’s. A pre-made peanut butter and jelly sandwich from The Avenue costs over $5, more than a freshly-made footlong sub at Subway” proving to readers that not only do students have to use their Plu$ dollars for a simple snack, but they are also overcharged along the process (Lewis). Also, Darin Grandfield, a guest columnist for the Mustang Daily expresses his feelings about the pricing, “the real winner is that [students are] not even done being ripped off yet, they then proceed to charge two of the Plus Dollars they forced [students] to buy for a yogurt, which is greater than 200 percent of the retail price,” claiming that campus dining’s methods of expensive prices is unnecessary (Grandfield). Next, while Cal Poly is proud of their “Learn by Doing” motto, is that also expected from the students when they are trying to eat? Having to do calculations to make sure they do not overcharge their PolyCard, or constantly worrying about how many meals they have left for the week is not the way to teach the school’s infamous slogan. However, the ultimate solution to all of these problems would be a buffet-style meal plan with a certain amount of meals per quarter, instead of per week. In comparison to the majority of the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) dining systems, Cal Poly is one of the only California public universities that uses the system. While each campus has a different dining plan, they all have a version of buffet-style for every meal. Students are not limited to what they eat. According to the University of California, Berkeley’s dining website, the “residential meal plans offer the flexibility and freedom that students need to dine with at [Cal] however they want, whenever they want” allowing students to choose when and how they want to eat on their own schedule (Dining at Cal). Benefits are also available with a simple meal plan. CSU Channel Islands has “bonuses received when adding dollars to [the] card and tax savings” giving students the opportunity to save money and actually want to use their meal plan (Dining Services). There are a various amount of solutions possible for the Cal Poly dining system. Through an assortment of different benefits solely from the swipe of a card for a buffet-style meal, the school and students can both benefit.

Although the dining on-campus is suggested to be healthy and nutritious, it is actually worse than fast food. Reading through the Cal Poly Dining’s Campus Dining webpage, incoming students are told the benefits of having a dining plan such as, taking “pleasure in a wide variety of healthy meals and ethnic cuisines” (Dining Plan). To preface, healthy means at least better than fast food. A comparison between Metro Station’s Beef & Broccoli a la carte and a Chinese fast food restaurant, Panda Express’ Beef & Broccoli shows that the fast food has healthier portions than campus’ Metro Station. According to my calculations from Metro Station’s nutritional facts, every serving has 37.0 calories per one ounce serving (19 Metro Station Nutrition Information). While at Panda Express, there are 26.78 calories per one ounce serving (Nutritional Information). That is a 10.22 calorie per one ounce difference; the regular portion at Metro is approximately double the size of Panda Express’. Proving that Metro Station serves larger portions with more calories counteracts Cal Poly Dining’s main objective of serving healthy and ethnic meals.
Last, by convincing incoming students about the variety of restaurants and markets on campus, freshmen are told they have an assortment of dining halls to eat at, but in reality are restricted to three main spots. The campus dining website states that Cal Poly “offers over 18 restaurants and food venues on campus with at least one food operation open every day” including the two grocery stores, two coffee shops, and two smoothie shops, which account for one-third of the facilities (Campus Dining). However, freshmen are mainly designated to eat at three of the eateries (Vista Grande, Metro Station, and Sandwich Factory) because of the lack of acceptance of the meal plan anywhere else. If students are expected to spend a certain amount of meal credits per week, there should be more dining facilities open that take meals, instead of forcing freshmen to use their Plu$ dollars. The school’s lack of open venues limits students to constantly eat at the same places. Also, over the weekend, only one restaurant, Vista Grande, is open, although it closes early. This restricts students to eat at the same place, even when Vista Grande barely changes their menu. There should be either more restaurants open during the weekend that accompany meal credits, or more variety at the one eatery open on weekends.

As a freshman who is required to eat on campus because of the dining plan, I propose changes. Us students need to take a stand. We can boycott the campus dining. We can write letters to Cal Poly Corporation, the non-profit organization in charge of the food, and insist on better food, cheaper prices, and a better meal plan overall. We should not have to be afraid of the food that we eat and how it affects us. By making small changes with the food, Cal Poly’s dining facilities could be more respected throughout the school.

Eileen Wu is a social sciences major.

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Addressing Contemporary Concerns

When considering what to write about in ENGL 134, keep in mind the cultural and political moment surrounding you right now. Rather than rely on topics that have been explored by thousands of students before you (capital punishment, underage drinking, abortion), seek out topics that are current and relevant to you. For instance, writers in this section address issues that have affected their lives, sometimes in uniquely personal ways. For instance, Trevor Brumm shares his “coming out” experience, while Van Anh Ho profiles a peer who has devoted himself to Buddhism. Brian Middaugh, on the other hand, argues for a more favorable understanding of gaming culture—a culture which is often disparaged by media. As you read these essays, keep in mind the issues that affect you every day—issues which could use further exploration and critical engagement.

Zeroes to infinity addresses the complex financial issues that have consumed the nation for the past few years. Could an image such as this one actually help narrow an argument’s focus or support its claim(s)? What writing strategies might help you scale down a deeply complicated issue, such as the current state of the nation’s economy, to a topic that can be effectively argued in an essay?
The image below, titled *Freedom (Behind Bars)*, asks us to confront animal rights. Zooming in on the cow’s face forces us to look the cow in the eye and contemplate the dietary choices we make every day. What elements of the image highlight the irony of “Freedom” printed on the cow’s ear tag?
As Trevor Brumm’s title conveys, “coming out” is the dominant focus of his essay. However, Brumm expands his purpose to a more general theme of “belongingness.” He shows how some people feel the need to ignore aspects of themselves in order to “fit in” to a specific crowd, especially in high school. Yet, at the end of the essay, Brumm expresses his comfort with himself since arriving to college. Brumm is clearly writing to an audience of peers. How does the way you view your audience limit or expand the information you reveal about yourself in an essay?

What was originally just a writing assignment to reflect back on a life-changing experience ended up being something that helped me grow as a person. After writing this essay, I have become more comfortable and confident with who I am. Putting my experience into words and onto paper has forced me to look back on it from a different perspective. I was able to see how much I’ve changed as a person over just the last couple of years.

For as long as I can remember, I knew I was different than most kids. I didn’t enjoy playing sports like other boys, and I always felt more comfortable around girls. As I got older, I started to become attracted to other males. I tried to deny those feelings, thinking maybe it was just a phase that would pass over time. Those feelings and attractions never disappeared and if anything, they just became stronger. I finally came to terms with my sexuality during my sophomore year of high school. However, I waited until after graduation to tell anyone I was gay. I was afraid that my friends wouldn’t want to hang out with me anymore or that my family would disown me. But as it turned out, my relationships with my friends and family members remained exactly the same. Coming out of the closet has been a life changing experience for me. After years of hiding who I really was, I finally feel comfortable in my own skin.

High school is often said to be the best four years of someone’s life. Teenagers are beginning the transition to adulthood, but still have many freedoms and few responsibilities. My time spent in high school wasn’t as great though. Yes, I made a lot of friends and got to experience many new things, but I still had to deal with and hide the fact that I was different. Towards the end of senior year, people began getting dates for senior prom. My friends kept asking me which girl I was going to bring to the dance. I always made some excuse about why I didn’t have a date yet. Since my high school was in such a conservative area, there was no way I could bring another guy to the dance. It would have shocked everyone, and I wasn’t ready for people to know that I was gay. I ended up going to the prom with a few other dateless friends. We made our way to the dance floor, and my dateless friends quickly found dance partners. I didn’t know what to do. I felt like everyone was staring at me and saw that I was alone. And despite the fact that I was surrounded by my classmates, that was exactly how I felt at that moment, detached and isolated.
Over the following summer, I found enough courage to tell one of my best friends that I was gay. Soon after, most of my close friends found out. They were all so supportive and proud of me for finally accepting who I was. Our friendships became stronger, and I felt more connected to them than ever before. As great as it felt to be out to my friends, I was still hiding a huge secret from my parents. They’re both very liberal and have never said anything negative about homosexuals before. Yet I was still nervous to tell them because I had no idea how they’d react once they found out. One night, after my mom had just got home from work, I told her there was something I needed to talk to her about. Opening up to her wasn’t difficult; it felt natural. The words began to flow out of my mouth, and there was nothing I could do to stop them. I had finally told my own mother about the part of me I had been keeping secret for so long. She opened her arms and told me that I was still her son, and she would always love me no matter what. All the anxiety and dismay I was feeling had eased. The next day she asked me when I was planning on telling my dad. My parents are divorced, and my dad lives in another state. I decided to fly out to Arizona to visit him and my step-mother for a week towards the end of summer. I waited until my very last day there to come out to my dad. Like my mom, I sat him down and told him. Immediately after, I started crying. It was the hardest thing I had ever had to do. I don’t know why, but I was sure he would be disappointed in me, and I was terribly afraid of his reaction. He responded just like my mom had and told me that the fact that I was gay didn’t change anything. I couldn’t have been more relieved. A huge weight that I had been carrying around for years was finally lifted off my shoulders. I consider myself to be extremely lucky to have such accepting parents who made my coming out process a positive one. I know many people who didn’t have such an easy time coming out, and I am grateful that mine was.

Going away to college is something most kids dream about and for me, it was a clean slate. It was a chance to move to a new town and make new friends who I could feel comfortable enough around to be myself. Shortly after coming to Cal Poly, I joined clubs and support groups with other gay students who I quickly became good friends with. One thing I love about college is that it seems like nobody cares that I’m gay. I have made friends here from all different backgrounds and we all get along just fine. It also wasn’t until coming to college that I started dating. I was always nervous about going on a date with another guy, but now that I’ve been on a few, I’ve realized that it was just typical nervousness that people get when they go on dates.

Coming out of the closet really has changed my life for the better. I’m still the same person I have always been, with the same interest and hobbies, but I’m not lying to myself anymore about something that makes me different than many of my friends and peers. I’ve developed a sense of confidence that I never had before.

TREVOR BRUMM is a civil engineering major.
A Person Who Changed His Fate

Van Anh Ho

Back in high school during my freshman year, I made friends with many students who were at least three years older than me. Most of my friends and I now pursue our dreams of mastering school at different places; unfortunately, we do not know whether we will be able to find jobs or survive in the workplace after graduation, because people in the United States are dealing with the economic recession. As life gets harder, I feel like my friends and I compete against each other for our future—except for Thich Tam Tu, who gave up his own life and now is ordained (authorized) as a Buddhist monk. As I recall, Tu's decision surprised everyone who knew him (including myself), and we called him insane when he decided to join the Buddhist monastery for the rest of his life, instead of continuing in higher education since he academically ranked in the top ten of his class.

I got to know Tu when I first came to high school because we took the same Food Nutrition class—even though he was a senior at that time. Throughout the entire school year, Tu always impressed other people by achieving high test scores. Talking to Tu a few times, I figured out that he was an inquisitive person who had an interest in the online world; he loved to discover and develop useful software for computers. He wanted to become a successful computer engineer in the future. From my perspective, Tu was an intelligent person; however, he seemed to be self-centered. His “self-important” stature caused him to lose a lot of friends. For example, he always wanted to be a top student and never wanted to share his study habits or strategies with anyone else. Any time his grades got lower than the others, he would get mad and usually complained for long periods of time.

Finally, his hard work paid off when many universities in California accepted him while he was still in the process of finishing high school. Unexpectedly, after his graduation, no one at school could contact him anymore. Once, I tried to call him on the phone, but someone else picked it up and briefly told me that Tu no longer used the number because he gave up every-
thing to become a monk at the Buddhist Temple in Orange County. I felt both surprised and curious about Tu’s decision, but I could ask no more questions because the issue seemed to be Tu’s privacy.

Three years passed by and the memories of Tu seemed to fade away in my mind. However, when my English 134 class discussed profiling “someone who makes change,” I immediately thought of Tu. I wanted to know his insight on being a monk, how difficult it was, and if he regretted giving up on school. A few days later, I decided to take a trip to the Buddhist Temple in Orange County to see if Tu still lives there. I came to the temple around six o’clock in the evening when the sun was setting slowly above the horizon. The main gate of the temple still opened widely, but no one seemed to be there because the surrounding remained very calm and tranquil. The temple did not look ancient or scary, but the quietness made my heart pound rapidly as I stepped toward the entrance. While I was walking nervously toward the main house, I was startled by the rustling noise from the backyard of the house. My curiosity made me turn toward that direction to see what was there. In a dim light, I saw a human figure, who was sweeping the leaves on the ground. I guessed that he had to be one of the monks in this temple, so I stepped a little bit further to greet him. As he saw me approaching him, he stopped sweeping and bowed me. He smiled gently as he said, “Welcome to the Buddhist Temple.” The voice sounded familiar to me because I had heard so many times in my life. After a few second flashing back my memories, I impulsively pulled back when I realized that was Tu’s voice. In contrast, Tu had no trouble recognizing me. We were both surprised and happy to see each other at the temple because I did not contact him before I came.

Tu physically changed so much that I could hardly recognize him: the image of Tu in high school—dressed in expensive clothes, and his hair in a Mohawk style—suddenly disappeared from my mind when I confronted him wearing a long dark brown robe wrapped around his body with his hair cut short. He looked skinnier than many years ago, but a calm and serene expression always remained on his face. Tu was not embarrassed by his appearance when he caught my eyes widening uncontrollably, but rather he gently smiled and explained, “The real happiness [did] not come from the materialistic side of life.” His statement caught me off guard as I realized Tu has already become another person. Since he became a monk, physical appearance does not matter to him anymore. He seems to care more about abstract images in the mind that deal with spirit, wisdom, and thoughtfulness. Before I visited him, I knew that he would look different than he was in high school, but I did not expect to see him mentally change.

Facing Tu in the picture is a roughly fifty-year-old woman. She holds a box of instant noodles and a bag of clothes that she receives from Tu. Her body is covered by a big yellow plastic bag, which she uses as a rain coat. She looks pale as worry mounts on her face because of the destructive impact from the hurricane. In the photograph so many poor people just like her patiently wait for aid, even though apparent sorrow rises on their faces. They all live in the same financial panic since the hurricane hit their homes. Poverty has become their biggest enemy. When I first looked at Tu’s photograph, I was impressed because he changed my assumption about monks, who in my mind always stayed in the temple to practice their religion. Furthermore, seeing how Tu volunteers and helps unlucky people find hope and vitality in this huge world makes me glad. Although the supplies and money the monks have brought to those hurricane victims will not last for a lifetime, they show kindness among human beings. Besides helping those who happen to be the victims of horrible disasters on Earth, Tu tries to involve other people from different religions, races, and political beliefs to donate and make the world a better place.
I told Tu that his photograph reminded me of the time when I lived in Vietnam; I wished that I could have had a chance to volunteer like him when I eye witnessed people suffering in poverty because thousand of houses were destroyed, and hundreds of people were killed by the natural disasters every year. Since then, I idealistically promised myself that I would bring hope and happiness to these unlucky people when I grew up. However, when I came to America with my family in 2004, my life started to change: when I was in high school, I had tons of chances to serve a small community in Orange County and become an activist by volunteering, but I did not want to do anything for the others. I spent most of my time at school and online. And yet, I began to fret intensely when I saw the image of Tu serving a small community in Vietnam in that photograph; I felt so guilty for breaking my promise.

While Tu was listening to my anecdote, he showed himself as an open minded person because I saw his compassion expressed on his face. However, sometimes he just nodded his head. He waited a few seconds after I finished my story, and then he recalled his memories, “Everyone, including my family, thought that I lost my mind by going into the monastery.” And I was one of those people thinking Tu had gone crazy after he finished high school, because a lot of people including him wished that they could get admitted into universities, but the chances were rare. No one at that time knew why Tu wanted to become a monk. However, behind the mysterious decision was a traumatic event of his loveliest cousin passing away from an accident, and Tu suddenly realized that death was unpreventable and could happen to him at any moment. If he kept spending his time with the online world, it would make him become an inactive person in the real world, someone who would never know “the real meaning of life.” Instead, he wanted be a peace activist like the famous Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, so he could bring happiness to other people and would never feel regret if he had to face death.

In Tu’s philosophy “school is not the only place you can get an education,” which he then verified by saying that he learns valuable moral lessons—such as loving other people like brothers and sisters, treating animals like human beings because they have souls, and relaxing by practicing yoga—while he stays in the temple. The Buddhist Bible teaches him the meaning of happiness, which is about “caring, support, love, compassion, and wisdom.” Since then, Tu wants to share his knowledge with others, which he believes will benefit their lives. Throughout these explanations, I can see Tu as a beloved person.

Tu completely transformed from a competitive person into a generous monk, who now no longer sees himself as the most important person in his life. Indeed, his purpose is to promote non-violent activities along with other people, and together they will create change. Now, I agree with Tu’s decision when he chose to step aside from the materialistic and become a Buddhist monk. Even though I cannot join Tu’s activities, he still influences my life: his stories help me to become self-aware. At the same time, I feel is very disappointed with myself. Throughout many years, I had been working so hard but only for my benefit. I cared too much for my own life that I indifferently put aside the images of those who suffered from natural disasters around the world. But now I want to get involved in the community to help other people out of poverty and give them the power to survive. I hope that I will have more time to visit Tu, so I can learn more valuable lessons from him.

Van Anh Ho is an aerospace engineering major.
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Thich Tam Tu. Personal interview. 16 January 2010.
Naturally Deceptive  

John Larwood

A look of curiosity forms on my friend’s face. “Is that the normal Dasani cap?” she asks. I glance down at my water bottle to observe the green cap adorning my blue, plastic Dasani water bottle. “Yeah, they changed it. I guess it’s eco-friendly now,” I reply as I inspect the bottle’s label. The Dasani website confirms my conjecture: “better by design, [Dasani’s PlantBottle™] is made from up to 30% plant-based materials and is still a 100% recyclable bottle.” Yet, a question lingers in my mind—am I being totally duped?

Through the years, I have watched the push to ‘go green’ permeate the society around me. The ‘go green’ movement is the global campaign for reducing humanity’s negative impact on the sustainability of natural resources. From the Dasani PlantBottle™ to hybrid cars, products are being tailored to attract customers who want to help our planet; companies are responding to my generation’s enthusiasm for the Earth. For most products there seems to be a more sustainably-produced counterpart; instead of fried Doritos packaged in plastic, you can buy Sun Chips—baked using solar energy and packaged in compostable bags. Consumers even have a choice between wood pencils and pencils made with recycled paper. Ethically, it seems only natural to choose the recycled or compostable product when it comes time to make a decision about what to buy as a consumer. After all, if I choose to buy the conventionally produced, unsustainable (and often cheaper) item, I feel like I have personally betrayed Mother Nature and am actively contributing to her suffering.

The most familiar scene for these guilt-laden decisions is the grocery store. In every aisle, food items are strategically juxtaposed with their organic alternatives, so buying groceries turns into a gauntlet of moral decisions. The packaging of organic foods is designed to suggest natural, earth-friendly products. As with the Dasani PlantBottle™ and the Sun Chips bag, organic foods often strut their sustainability right on the packaging. The college students of today have been carefully conditioned to associate plant and sun motifs, and earthy, natural colors with organic foods. More importantly, we have been conditioned to associate organic products with environmental sensitivity. In terms of sustainability, however, the distinctions between organic and non-organic are not black and white.
From personal experience, I find that proponents of organic food tote the idea that organic farms produce food without pesticides and other pollutants, whereas conventional farms utilize pesticides and fossil fuels to a great extent. However, the benefits of the organic methods are not without their own consequences to the environment. An article from the scientific journal, *Nature*, states, “Competitive organic farmers keep their fields clear of weeds through frequent mechanical weeding—a method that damages nesting birds, worms and invertebrates—and high use of fossil fuels, which greatly increases pollution from nitrogen oxides” (Trewavas). So while pesticides are eliminated from the organic farming process, the gains are negated by the increased use of fossil fuels and damage to terrestrial habitats. The net effects of organic and conventional farming on the environment are not significantly different enough to claim a more sustainable choice.

The similarities between organic food production and conventional food production do not end with sustainability. Organic supporters protest the inhumane treatment of cattle in conventional feedlots, where cows numbering in the thousands are fed to reach their desired weight before being sent to the slaughterhouse. “Certified-organic animals on big farms and feedlots live and die under the same inhumane conditions conventionally raised animals do,” as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations do little more than insure certified organic cows consume organic grains (Ciesinski). “Having an organic dairy mostly just requires that the cows not have antibiotics or hormones used on them . . . and have access to grass a certain number of days per year” (Sharp). Organic herds may be found on the same property as conventional herds. Though the organic herds are kept separate, their conditions are alarmingly comparable to those of conventional herds despite their organic label.

The USDA certified-organic label becomes further suspect by the USDA’s failure to certify their imported products. “In July 2008, an investigation by reporters at WJLA, an ABC news affiliate in Washington, DC, found traces of aldicarb, a highly toxic and restricted insecticide in organic ginger that was sold under natural grocery Whole Foods’ ‘365 Organic’ label” (Gross). This ginger root came from China, where USDA relies on 5 international certification agencies to insure the food meets regulation (Gross). The credibility of the ‘certified-organic’ label is lost when the food does not actually meet the standards that the label entails. If the USDA regulations are not strictly enforced, organic food can literally become no different than conventionally produced food—what then, would be the benefit of organic food?

The problem may be big corporations taking advantage of profitable loopholes in the USDA system. A recent marketing campaign from the Sarah Lee Corporation seems to support this idea. Claims by the corporation suggest that their Eco-Grain is more sustainable than organic grain. The Cornucopia Institute, a farm policy research group, contends otherwise. The research group found that a loaf of Sarah Lee’s Earthgrains bread only contains about 20% of the Eco-Grain flour, with the rest of the flour coming from conventional wheat—a fact that reveals how negligible the benefits of the Eco-Grains are (Cornucopia Institute). “Corporations like Sara Lee clearly want to profit from consumers’ interest in ecological and healthy food production. But . . . Sara Lee is doing practically nothing to ensure its ingredients are truly ecologically produced” (Cornucopia Institute). I imagine other well-known brands have deceptions sitting beside these loaves of Eco-Grain bread, on grocery shelves, waiting to be discovered.

Seemingly, the only alternative to large organic corporations is locally grown produce. Michael Pollan, bestselling author of *The Botany of Desire* and *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, asserts, “If you have any space at all, a $70 home garden can yield $600 of produce. That is the cheapest, most local, most nutritious produce you can have” (“10 Questions”). Unfortunately, the cost is
likely greater than the yield. A recent study by Steve Sexton, a PhD agricultural resources student at UC Berkeley, suggests locally grown food is not as beneficial as Pollan claims. (Curlee). The production cost of locally grown food is notably greater than the production cost of food on big corporate farms. The problem is a lack of efficiency in local farming. To produce the required amount of food to feed the world with local farming, Sexton speculates the need for 214 million additional acres of land for farming. He calculates that the additional acreage and loss of efficiency will demand such a significant amount of energy that it will likely overwhelm any reduction of carbon-emissions that comes from decreased transportation and monocropping (Curlee). In the end, there is no clear improvement in sustainability offered by switching solely to local food production.

So what options do we have for sustainability then? I believe that hope lies somewhere in a combination of conventional, organic, and local production. By synergizing the efficiency of conventional production with the desire for sustainability, perhaps we can find a happy medium. The key is to build on the established methods of cheap, effective conventional farming. From this base, changes can be made with few detrimental consequences. Snack food juggernaut, Frito-Lay has shown this is possible by using solar power to operate their Sun Chips plant in Modesto. Beyond simply utilizing solar power, corporations can subsidize or assimilate local food producers to facilitate the research of sans pesticide food production. The changes are simple, but have yet to be widely adopted.

By turning a more critical eye to the products that we buy, it is not hard to see that we are indeed being duped. Only by demanding substantiated claims from manufacturers can we expect to see improvements in the way we are marketed to. For the time being, companies are able to get away with minimal efforts to appear sustainable. It is not enough that items like the Dasani PlantBottle™ are made partially of plant material. With the idea of sustainability in mind, we have to start questioning why Dasani bottles water at all when we can do away with the plastic bottle altogether by drinking from the tap. The fault does not lie with the corporations, but with us, the consumers. By not asking for better practices from the companies that produce the things we buy, we are showing how little we care. As a result, we are answered with superficial packaging changes like green bottle caps. The responsibility to push for sustainability lies on our shoulders, so it is time we asked for something more.

John Larwood is an art and design major.

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Video Games Are Not Evil!

Brian Middaugh

For my seventh birthday I got exactly what I wanted: a Game Boy Color. Since my first time ever popping in the little cartridge, video games have been a major hobby for me, and I am not alone. Young children, teenagers, and believe it or not over half of American adults are picking up keyboards, handhelds, and controllers and joining the new revolution in entertainment technology. (Harvard Health par. 1) Yet still some argue vehemently against video game use, namely the Mothers Against Video Game Addiction and Violence, also known as MAVAV.

MAVAV organizes against the video game industry, publishing articles, creating posters and signs protesting video games use, and opening forums for its members to express their hatred of the fastest rising industry in entertainment. According to their website, “MAVAV was launched in December of 2002 with high hopes of raising awareness of the hidden dangers associated with video games:

• Video games are addictive,
• 1 in every 9 gamers are already addicted.
• Video games have led to an epidemic of youth violence all across the world.
• Video games are socially isolating and desensitizing.
• Video games are an inherently inferior medium to film and literature.”

MAVAV’s claims are not only radical, but irrational and based primarily on utterly biased speculation. I have spent thousands of hours playing video games in the last decade, and I get straight A’s in school, I have plenty of friends, I don’t randomly break out in acts of aggression, and I am most certainly not dependent on or addicted to them. I’m not challenging MAVAV’s right to exist, but I believe there are a few things MAVAV could really learn about video games that may cause them to rethink their radical claims.

First of all, linking this so called “epidemic of youth violence” to video games is simply absurd. No study yet to date has conclusively linked video game use to acts of violence. According to the Harvard Health Letter, several randomized experiments have been conducted on the subject, and have only been able to prove that slight increases in aggressive behavior occur directly after playing a violent game, and such increases are only temporary. Aggression peaks for males around the adolescent years, and since video games are popular among adoles-
cent boys, it can be easy to immediately label them as the cause, however “violent behavior is influenced by so many factors—in innate personality, abusive parents, substance abuse, cultural beliefs—that it’s difficult to tease out media violence, of any sort, as a cause” (Harvard Health par. 4). Long-term violent tendencies are more conclusively linked with these factors, not video games. Furthermore, some experts even observe that video games may provide a useful cathartic effect in the years of a child’s life when their aggression levels are peaking. So doesn’t it seem more responsible and reasonable to just admit that the “epidemic of youth violence” is mostly attributable to rises in divorce rates and drug use than from parents allowing their children to play video games? Of course, I am not pleading that all young children should be allowed to play any game; I’m simply saying that there is not exactly a call to eradicate video games from society. No matter what kind of media is in question, responsible parents should always monitor what their kids are being exposed to, and luckily the video game industry has provided for you the ESRB (Electronic Software Rating Board), which rates almost all video games based on their content to facilitate just that. Would the video game industry do this if they did not care about your kids?

As far as the second preconceived notion that MAVAV holds—that video games are socially isolating and desensitizing—is concerned, MAVAV could not be more inaccurate. Sure, I will admit that early video games were typically pretty isolating, usually having the capacity for one or maybe two players. However the video game industry has been working tirelessly to make video games into a social activity, and the strides taken in this direction have been massive. The Game Boy, invented in 1989, “was the first handheld video game unit that allowed systems to connect for multiplayer games. This primitive form of wired networking was made possible by the Game Link Cable which connected two Game Boy systems, and the Game Boy Four Player Adapter, which allowed up to four systems to link and exchange information that was used in head-to-head competitions” (Cohen par. 5) From here the social networking capability of video games has soared. Virtually all present day video game units are capable of bringing fellow gamers together through split screen, where up to four people play a game sharing a unit, Local Area Networking or System Link, where several units in close proximity to each other connect and play, and the Goliath of social video gaming, online play, which is done over the internet. For example, Microsoft’s online video game service for its Xbox, known as Xbox Live, has 14 million members, and USA Today calls it “a social media and entertainment hub” (Snider par. 2). Members can find their friends online by exchanging “Gamertags” and invite new gamers they meet online to join their list of friends. Friends can join parties and chat over headsets while they play a game together, send voice and text messages back and forth, find out what games their friends own and play, and the service even allows members to customize their very own avatar, and write a short biography and motto to make their profiles unique and give others a glimpse at their personality. And social interaction doesn’t end when you put down the controller; video games have become so popular that they are often topics for discussion among gamers. Just like two fans of a popular TV show or book might discuss last night’s watching or reading, two or more fans of a particular game may discuss last night’s playing, exchange strategy, and introduce new games to each other. Entire magazines, websites, TV shows, and online chat forums have been dedicated to the purpose of video game analysis and discussion. Video games don’t socially isolate or desensitize their players; they bring people together; they create common interest; they provide party activities, and they have their own special culture. Xbox Live updates their service several times a year; maybe those of you associated with MAVAV should update your complaints list.
So, why then, are video games seen among MAVAV members as an inferior medium to literature and film? Probably because when they think of someone playing video games, they imagine someone sitting in a small, dark room with flashing lights and mindlessly mashing buttons. We’ve all heard the phrase “video games rot your brain” at some point in our lives; however, anyone who actually knows how the human mind works should disagree. Video games actually stimulate the brain in a number of ways, and in fact are such powerful learning tools that James Paul Gee, a curriculum and instruction professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and his colleague Kent Squire developed the Education Arcade project, an initiative to further explore the educational capabilities of video games. In his recent book, What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy, Gee remarked, “video games incorporate learning principles that reflect what researchers know about human learning” (qtd. from Chaptman par. 7). He and Squire, working with their colleagues at MIT developed a game called “Supercharged” to help students learn about particle physics. The player takes control of an electrically charged particle and navigates through magnetically charged mazes. As the student plays they actually learn about the behavior of particles and electromagnetic interactions. When tested at a Massachusetts middle school, the students who had played “Supercharged” scored on average a remarkable 20% higher on the final exam than those taught on traditional book-and-lecture curriculum. It is my understanding that people whose brains are rotting don’t typically raise their grade in physics by two letter marks. The potential of video games as learning tools and media should not be underestimated because of contrived connotations with dark rooms, flashing lights, and mindless button-mashing. They often contain themes, characters, and multiple threaded plots like any good novel. They have hours of cut scenes in between game play that can rival the beauty, complexity, and mastery of film. They challenge players to solve puzzles and thrive in a new universe. Inferior? I think not.

It’s time for MAVAV to reconsider their position on video games. It’s time to forget your preconceived notions regarding violence, seclusion, and inferiority. It’s time to accept video games as a new and exciting media, rather than denounce them as a plague on society. They have many positive uses including entertainment, recreation, and even education, and more applications are still being discovered. So next time you feel like venting your video game hate speech on the MAVAV forum, or sticking “awareness banners” in your car window, consider what I’ve said. Just give video games a chance, and I doubt you’ll be disappointed.

**BRIAN MIDDAGH** is a software engineering major.

**WORKS CITED**


above board
General Education Course Objectives

The General Education Course Objectives for English 134 state that as a student enrolled in the course, you will learn to:

1. Understand the writing act as a means of exploring and expressing your ideas.
2. Approach the act of writing as a recursive process that includes drafting, revising, editing and proofreading.
3. Develop and apply a rhetorical awareness of your audience and use that awareness to assess your audiences and adjust your utterances to that audience.
4. Understand major organizational strategies and apply those strategies effectively with reference to your audiences.
5. Become aware of the major stylistic options such as voice, tone, figurative language and point of view and apply these options with rhetorical appropriateness.
6. 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. 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. 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. 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 Cal 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 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

*Note: All ENGL 102 and 113 courses have been “stretched,” which means that students in these courses continue to work with the same group of students and the same instructor in ENGL 134/133.*

**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 147 must take an additional course before registering for ENGL 103. Not for baccalaureate credit. Credit/No Credit grading only. To be taken concurrently with ENGL 134.

**ENGL 133 Writing and Rhetoric 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 and Rhetoric (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.
Tips for Succeeding in English 134

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.

English 134 students should be prepared to:

1. Compose essays that go 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 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. Students should be able to support general statements with details that are concrete, specific, accurate, and relevant. Moreover, English 134 students 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 for the subject matters about which they write.

7. Understand that writing elements have rhetorical purposes—for example, that the function of the conclusion is not to restate the thesis—and 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 Schaffer 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 a spell and grammar check on their word processing program.

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. Students should know that vocabulary is best learned 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**

Where to Get Help with Your Writing

The University Writing and Rhetoric Center offers free, one-to-one consultations for any class project that requires an element of writing and rhetoric: reading, writing, speaking, and developing visual texts. Undergraduate and graduate students professionally trained in both a 300-level course on one-to-one conferencing and subsequent workshops on writing and rhetoric in the disciplines are available to help all Cal Poly students improve their writing skills.

You may use the writing center’s services at any stage of your writing process, whether you are getting started on a project or editing at the final stages. Thirty-minute tutoring sessions are available by appointment or on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tutors are prepared to assist you with the following:

- Understanding the expectations of an assignment
- Brainstorming and generating ideas
- Crafting a thesis
- Developing your thoughts
- Organizing your points
- Researching and documenting your sources
- Adhering to a required format
- Editing your final draft
- Reviewing grammar and punctuation
- Writing in all disciplines (e.g. lab reports, research papers, literary analyses, senior projects)

Keep in mind that writing lab tutors will not simply proofread papers or provide you with a stamp of approval prior to submitting an assignment. Instead, the goal of a tutoring session is to help you gain new writing strategies and improve your writing skills so that you may more successfully complete writing tasks at Cal Poly and beyond.

The University Writing and Rhetoric Center

Phone (805) 756-6032
Location: Erhart Agriculture Building (10), Room 138

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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), which costs $35 and is given at 9 a.m. on a Saturday early in the fall, winter, and spring quarters. You must earn a score of 8 out of 12-points in order to complete your GWR milestone.

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. Students can enroll in one of 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.

The University has established 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.

When you reach ninety-quarter units, you can either take a GWR-approved upper-division course or you can take the WPE. 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 2011–2012

You are cordially invited to submit essays composed in your English 134/133/103/113 course to be considered for publication in the fifth volume of Fresh Voices: Composition at Cal Poly. If your work is selected for 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 as 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 three to seven pages in length.
• Original images (i.e. drawings, photos) that you think would be a useful addition to 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 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 10, 2011, to be considered for publication. 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