

Britt Starr, PhD

Teaching Portfolio

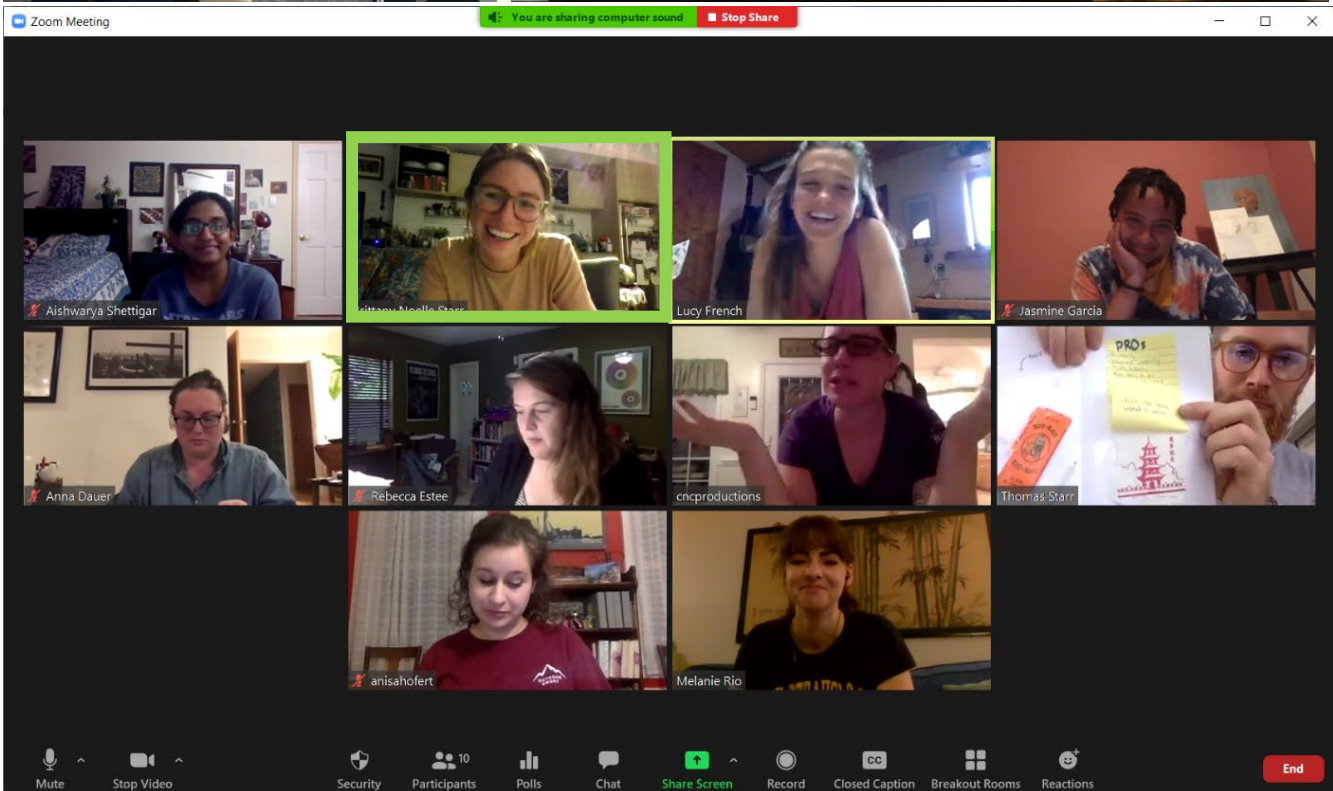


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Introduction

The following teaching portfolio provides a snapshot of my teaching for the consideration of the hiring committee. The portfolio begins with my teaching philosophy, which outlines my pedagogical values, commitments, and evidence of my accountability to these commitments. The second section of the portfolio features four sample course syllabi, which illustrate how my values and commitments are taken up in different course contexts. Finally, the portfolio ends with a more in-depth look at the evidence of my efficacy as an instructor, including student comments from course evaluations and letters from the teaching awards I have won. Below, I highlight some important points of emphasis.

Syllabus Frontmatter

I have taught courses in rhetoric and composition, digital studies, and film studies during my graduate work. In each of these courses, I draw upon intersectional feminist and antiracist frameworks to equip students to think critically and structurally about the complex issues each course examines.

The first sample course syllabus includes the most current version of my course frontmatter—course overview, assignment explanations, and evaluation guidelines—which reflects the core principles described in my teaching philosophy. I want to call attention to the ways that this frontmatter makes my values transparent and creates an inclusive, equitable, and compassionate infrastructure for learning. For the sake of time and space, I've removed the course policies and list of campus resources that I normally include, as well as the schedule of readings. Instead, I've included the course and assignment descriptions to highlight how I design innovative assignment structures and scaffolding to facilitate deep, critical, and creative engagement with course concepts and skills.

Teaching Philosophy

An educator by calling, I aim to empower learners to imagine and build more just, more joyful, and more livable worlds using rhetorical skills. Whether I am teaching digital rhetoric, film, or first-year writing, my approach begins as any rhetorical inquiry must, with my audience. Who are the students? What do they care about? How do they think? And why? From surveys, free-writes, and discussion in the first two weeks of the course, I try to learn enough about students to make the course meaningful to them. From student feedback and teaching and administrative awards I've won, I am gratified that my pedagogy seems to foment passion, curiosity, hope, and empowerment in diverse students.

From the macroscopic view of course design to the microscopic planning of daily assignments, I design for deep engagement. The Havruta Partner Conversations, for example, is a semester-long assignment I have used in my digital and rhetorical studies courses that facilitates students' authentic, ongoing, and collaborative engagement with course material and one another. The assignment is inspired by the Jewish "Havruta" practice, which encourages learning through dialogue—especially through compassionate disagreement with a reading partner. At the beginning of the semester, I randomly assign students an intellectual partner. Throughout the semester, they meet with their partner outside of class at least twice a month to discuss course concepts, brainstorm questions for class discussion, and exchange feedback on assignment drafts. In their meetings, they maintain a "conversation journal" with bulleted notes and questions from their conversations, which I draw from regularly in class discussion. I also give time in class for Havruta partners to pose their questions in small groups to gain experience leading discussion. Students are often amazed at how dramatically these interconnected reading, writing, and discussion practices improve their comprehension and retention of complex course concepts and generate deeply meaningful learning experiences.

Teaching college-level English has led me to discover a second calling for writing program administration. Through various committee work and as Assistant Director of the University of Maryland Academic Writing Program (AWP), I helped strengthen our commitments to antiracism, justice, empathy, and civic engagement by redesigning the standard syllabus to center antiracist analytical frameworks like rhetorical listening and intersectional feminism, in addition to including more texts by rhetors of color. I helped write the new textbook, piloted the syllabus, led professional development sessions, and mentored faculty. I later won a \$1000 grant to develop a rhetorical reading curriculum that envisions mindful, critical reading as a civic practice. This curriculum, which I called, "Mindful Reading for the Civic Good," is now recommended to all first-year writing faculty.

I am passionate about running writing program administration nimbly to meet pressing challenges. As Assistant Director for the 2020-2021 academic year, I supported AWP's 60+ instructors as they transitioned suddenly to emergency online teaching. For this I helped quickly develop materials, programming, and infrastructure to enable the sudden, massive transition. I also mentored first-time instructors as they navigated multiple intersecting exigencies: enacting antiracist curriculum during a national reckoning with this country's persistent racism and prioritizing student empathy without compromising instructors' own well-being during a global pandemic. I have also spearheaded initiatives to develop equitable grading practices, toeing a fine line between the interests of different stakeholders such as students, their parents, higher administrators, and writing faculty. I obtained IRB approval for the research team to present our preliminary findings at the 2022 Conference on College Composition and Communication. We are slated to present our second round of findings at the 2023 conference and are currently collaborating on a paper to share our findings with the larger field of writing studies and writing program administration. I look forward to continuing this work.

Condensed Syllabi and Assignments

Sample Syllabus #1: An Undergraduate Course in Rhetoric and Digital Studies

English 293-0101 Sp22 | T/Th 2–3:15PM | Tawes 0205

“Designing Democracy in the Age of the Social Web”



Image by Steve Gale courtesy of Unsplash.

Instructor: Britt Starr (Please call me “Britt.”) | bstarr@umd.edu

Course links: [ELMS](#) site | Google Drive Course Folder

Office Hours: Th 3:30-4:30PM in Tawes 2222 or by appointment via email to meet on Zoom.

Zoom Meeting Room: <https://umd.zoom.us/j/3873205773>

This syllabus is a thorough guide meant to help you have a rich and positive experience in the course. Please ask if anything is unclear.

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Overview

What does it mean to live with others in a digital age? If our communication and information access is mediated by largely unregulated, profit-driven technologies, what are the social consequences? How can we think rhetorically about the design of so-called “social” technologies like “social media” to interrogate who these technologies serve (and who they don’t), why, how, and with what ethical consequences for democratic society? Finally, how might we critically *reimagine* and *redesign* the technologies to improve, rather than impede, democratic deliberation and participation? These questions will guide our considerations through all three units of the course. The thematic course title, “Designing Democracy in the Age of the Social Web” signals that in this iteration of the course, we will situate questions of rhetoric and writing within contemporary conversations--popular and scholarly--about ethical design, democracy, and social web technologies.

Some of the topics we will interrogate over the semester include: the relationship between technology and democracy, publics and the public sphere, the importance of conversation and communication in cohering a public sphere, ethical design, media and mediation, algorithms and how they affect communication among publics, government regulation of big tech, and other questions of power and justice within the operations of information media, social media, and news media.

Modalities of engagement will include mindful and critical reading (and listening, watching, etc), group discussion, rhetorical analysis, interviewing, podcasting, zine-making, draft workshops and peer review, free-writing, informal writing, [process writing](#), academic writing, and various forms of collaboration.

Consider submitting any of your major coursework for publication in [The Undergraduate Journal of Contemporary Issues and Media](#) hosted by the University of Utah. I would be happy to mentor you through the submission process. Don’t hesitate to reach out at any point if you’re interested!

Assignments

Major Projects and their Grade Percentages

1. [Class Participation](#) (including self-reflective notes and Havruta notes): 20%
 - a. Self-reflective notes
 - b. [Havruta conversations](#) (25% of participation grade)
2. [Reading journal](#): 20%
3. [Podcast](#): 20%
4. [Zine](#): 10%
5. [Essay](#): 20%
6. [Final: Havruta Course Synthesis](#): 10%

Please find a description of each major project below. We will discuss each in more detail in class.

1. Class Participation

Description: This course is a seminar-style course, which means it is discussion-based, rather than lecture-style. This means that your participation in many ways *creates* the content of the class. This also means that **reading the assigned readings is crucial**. I have limited the length, volume, and difficulty of readings (aiming for max 2 hours- often much less- per class period) so that you can read carefully, think with the readings, and take notes.

Find a good note-taking system that works for you. For example, here's mine:

Whenever possible, I prefer to read printed materials and underline and write notes in the margins. Studies have shown that hand-writing notes most effectively aids memory. For digital texts, I use Adobe Acrobat to highlight and add "comments". When reading online, I use Hypothes.is or keep a Google Doc with notes going in an adjacent window. Whatever the medium, I summarize important and interesting points in the margins and write my own thoughts and questions where they arise in the text so that I can remember what I was thinking at a glance.

Reading actively will ensure that you come to class prepared to discuss and work with the readings. To participate effectively, you must **bring the readings and your notes to class**. Include page numbers in your notes so you can point us to specific passages in the text. Credit for your Reading Journal and Participation are ways I recognize and honor this otherwise invisible labor. Some of the readings will be challenging. I don't expect you to understand everything from every reading, but I expect you to give every reading a genuine effort. See more reading guidelines under "Reading Journal" below.

Participating in class can look a lot of different ways, from *listening* and being attentive when we meet, to actively contributing to group discussions (which includes listening *at least* as much as speaking), to completing the in-class activities. I hope that the variety of engagement modes will make it possible for everyone to participate comfortably in at least some of the modalities. Your conversations with your Havruta partner also count towards the participation grade via the conversation notes you share with me. Part of the reason the course is seminar-style is because

learning is a profoundly *social* cognitive activity, i.e. you learn more when you engage with others and think actively with the materials. Participation assignments are designed to facilitate your engagement with the course materials via conversation and collaboration with your peers.

An attempt at transparency: As a person and as an instructor, I value *process* (over product or perfection), *community* and *collectivity* (over individualism), *accountability* (related to integrity), and *growth* (see Carol Dweik on growth vs fixed mindset). I attempt to build courses from these core values. Placing a high value on your participation in the course-- participation is weighted equally to the other major assignments-- is one way I try to cultivate a classroom community grown of these values. Ultimately, though, it's up to you all what the classroom environment will feel like. I hope you recognize that each of you co-constructs the course as we go along. In other words, you are powerful. I hope you will use it well.

A. Participation self-reflective notes

Due at mid-semester (3/3) and end of semester (5/3).

Description: The self-reflective notes are a space for you to self-reflect on your class participation. Given the description of class discussion's guiding principles above, how is participation going for you? How have you been preparing for class discussion and how have these preparation strategies worked for you? Is there room for improvement? Are there other strategies you want to try going forward? Where do you feel challenged? How are you overcoming (or attempting to overcome, or not) these challenges? How has your participation affected your learning and experience of the course?

How you will be graded: At the end of your note, please identify what grade you would give yourself for your participation and briefly discuss why. These notes will determine 58% of your participation grade in the course. The second one is weighted slightly more heavily than the first to reward growth and improvement.

B. Havruta Conversations

Notes are due every two weeks: 2/3, 2/17, 3/3, 3/17, 4/7, 4/21, and 5/5 in your shared Havruta Google doc.

Directions: I am drawing from the [Jewish havruta practice of peer-guided text study](#) to create a forum for you to think with a peer about the course material and about your own work over the course of the semester. I hope you will draw inspiration from the partnership described in the article linked above to have conversations with your partner that are rooted in respect for one another across your differences. Respectful disagreement is central to the Havruta practice, so I invite you to challenge each other respectfully (and to explore how to do that). I hope you will not be afraid to push each other productively, to think *with* each other, to support each other through the course, and to hold each other accountable.

Conversations with your Havruta partner will occur outside of class time in the [mode and medium](#) you and your partner choose. They should last at least twenty to thirty minutes and occur at least twice per month throughout the semester. I have added deadlines throughout the

course schedule to help keep you on track. Take notes together during your conversation in the shared Havruta Google doc for credit. You will also workshop drafts of major assignments for the course with your Havruta partner.

How you will be graded: You get 6 points for each completed entry in your Havruta conversation Google doc. No partial credit. Total credit for your combined entries will comprise 42% of your participation grade in the course.

2. Reading Journal

Reading journal entries are due daily in your Reading Journal Google doc. See course schedule for several exceptions.

Directions: The reading journal is a space for you to think with the readings through informal writing. To facilitate your engagement with the texts and ability to participate in class discussion, I expect you to come to each class with *at least*:

- 1) a good sense of the **main argument** and **aims** of that day's reading(s)
- 2) **one quotation** from the reading that you want to raise for collective consideration (include the page number)
- 3) **one question** the reading raises for you
- 4) some **notes** from the assigned reading to facilitate your participation (see suggestions below)

My hope is that you will use the reading journal as a space to think about what you're reading through writing. Experiment with what works for you. The reading journal is a place to verbalize your thinking in response to the readings and to set yourself up to participate in class discussion. Refer to specific passages in the text wherever possible and include the page number for the reference.

While the four enumerated items listed above are an important starting point, here are some other ideas to help you engage:

- Pull out and discuss specific terms or phrases that strike you as particularly important, useful, troubling, or otherwise notable.
- Discuss what you find interesting, confusing, or moving.
- Notice how a given text makes its argument or responds to its rhetorical situation.
- Pose a question or two that the reading(s) raised for you that you think deserve(s) further consideration, or which you may want to think with your classmates about.
- Note ideas from the readings to pursue further in one of your larger course projects.
- Consider how the week's readings fit with past readings from the course and overall course themes.

How you will be graded: You get 6 points for each complete entry. Entries must include the four enumerated items above for full credit. If an entry is missing any part(s) of the assignment, it gets 3/6 points. On days where there are multiple readings assigned, do your best to provide some

notes on each reading, but the minimum requirement is that you do one complete entry for *one* of the readings.

3. Podcast

Workshop 2/17. Final due 2/24. Self-assessment note due 3/1.

Description: Create a 5-minute podcast (exported as an .mp3 file) in which you interview a peer and someone of a different age about how the internet, social media, and/or communication technologies have affected your relationships. Draw inspiration for your conversation questions from the Unit 1 readings. See ELMS for more details.

How you will be graded: Turn in an assignment goals note and self-assessment note. See “Your Evaluation in the Course” section below for more information.

4. Zine

Workshop 3/29. Final and self-assessment note due 4/5.

Description: Make a zine that reviews, synthesizes, and illustrates your insights from Unit 2, “Information Media: Design and Social Consequences.” See ELMS for more details.

How you will be graded: Turn in a self-assessment note. In this note, please include an explanation of your zine and how it connects to course themes.

5. Ethical Design Essay

Draft due for workshop 4/28. Final due 5/11 (midnight).

Description: Compose an informed and imaginative essay that proposes an ethically designed solution to a social problem caused or exacerbated by social media and/or the social web. Include an explanation of the social problem and how technology has helped, hindered, or produced it. Also include a discussion of the potential limitations and unintended consequences of your proposed solution. See ELMS for more details.

How you will be graded: Turn in an assignment goals note and self-assessment note. See “Your Evaluation in the Course” section below for more information.

6. Final: Havruta Course Synthesis

Due Monday, 5/16 by 12:30pm. Note: This document takes the place of the final exam for this course.

In your co-written course synthesis, you and your Havruta partner will reflect together on the semester. What are some of your key insights? What questions and concerns has the course raised for you? How has the course changed your thinking? Be as specific as possible and please

reference specific readings where appropriate. I'd love to see you making connections across specific readings as well. Please also feel welcome to reflect on the structure of the course, the assignments, and the ungrading experiment. I will be especially curious to read your reflections on how the alternative grading modality of this course affected your experience with the material and/or your understanding of yourself, how you learn, and what motivates you.

How you will be graded: Please note at the end of the document what grade you think your course synthesis deserves and why. This can be brief!

Your Evaluation in the Course: An experiment in “ungrading”:

This semester, I'm trying out an experiment, backed by research, with my grading and assessment practice. My goal is to move away from grade-motivated learning and towards authentically student-motivated learning. I want you to feel free from the fear of failure (and the psychological morass of being quantitatively ranked against peers) to take creative and critical risks, to pursue your own interests, to explore your motivations, and to be the author of your own educational journey. We will set up the mental framework for this approach by discussing Alfie Kohn's article together, "The Case Against Grades." I'll ask you to reflect on what your relationship with grades has been through your lifetime and how grades have affected your learning. At the bottom of this section you will find some other resources you can consider if you are interested in learning/thinking more about the topic.

After you have read this section in full, please respond via the ELMS assignment acknowledging that you have read it. Please also note your questions, concerns, and initial thoughts about this method of "ungrading" in your response. As this is an experiment for me, I welcome your feedback. It will help me adjust my methods to better serve you and future students. There is an assignment space for this response in ELMS [here](#).

How grading will work in this class:

For each assignment, I will give you an assignment sheet with instructions, objectives, and required components for the assignment.

At the start of each **major assignment**, you will write an “**assignment goals note**” that takes into consideration these objectives and deliverables and discusses:

1. what you hope to gain from the assignment,
2. what risks you will take, and
3. what your personal learning and skills-based objectives are.

The assignment goals note is worth 5 points for completion. No partial credit.

When you turn in the assignment, you will write a “self-assessment note” that analyzes:

1. how well you achieved your goals,
2. what you learned,
3. what surprised you,
4. where you fell short and why,
5. what you would do differently next time, and finally,
6. what grade you think your project deserves and why.

In my role as your learning facilitator and academic coach, **I will give you qualitative feedback** about what I see as the strengths of your assignment and areas for improvement.

If I think the grade you have given yourself seems unreasonable, whether too low or too high, I will discuss that with you in my feedback and give you the opportunity to revise. If your grade seems reasonable to me, that is the grade you will get.

For **minor assignments**, you will receive **full credit for completion**. My hope is that this will free you from worrying about whether it’s “good” or “bad” so that you can follow your own curiosity, take risks, and give your mental energy to the process of thinking with the material rather than worrying about your performance.

Evaluation Key to Guide Your Self-Assessment

Instead of using a 100-point system, which does not calibrate well with the assessment of writing, we will use letter grades only. They are as follows in order from highest to lowest: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F. ELMS may present us with obstacles. We will address these as they present themselves. Please communicate with me if anything is unclear or bothering you.

Resources on Ungrading and Related Pedagogies:

- Stommel, Jesse. “Ungrading” [Presentation](#) website and [video](#).
- “Ungrading: What? How? Why?” Headagogy with Steve Pearlman. Jan. 4, [link](#).
- Gardner, Traci. “When Your Grades Are Based on Labor.” Tracigardner.com. [Link](#).
- Melzer, Dan, D.J. Quinn, Lisa Sperber, and Sarah Faye. “So Your Instructor Is Using Contract Grading...” Writingcommons.org. [Link](#).
- Craig, Sherri. “Your Grading Contract Ain’t It.” WPA: Writing Program Administration, vol. 44, no. 3, Summer 2021, pp. 145-146, [link](#).
- @GrubStreetWomen’s (aka Dr. Kate Ozment) [Twitter thread](#) (helpful for accessibility and Canvas tips)
- Carillo, Ellen C. The Hidden Inequities in Labor-Based Grading. U of Colorado P, 2021.
- Inoue, Asao B. Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom. WAC Clearing House, 2019.
- [Pedagogue + Infrequent Words](#) podcast.

Sample Assignment from ENGL293

Ethical Design Essay Assignment Description

Brief Description: An informed and imaginative essay that proposes an ethically designed solution to a social problem caused or exacerbated by social media and/or the social web.

Required Parts:

- Identify a social problem caused or exacerbated by unethical tech design. For our purposes and in the context of this course, a “social problem” is a problem that harms the health of or potential health of our democracy.
- Define the problem. You may want to draw on external sources to help you argue that it *is* a social problem or that it is not sufficiently recognized as a social problem. You will definitely want to draw on external sources to argue for the existence of the problem (i.e. to explain the problem).
 - Here’s one useful source (of many) that you can draw on to define your social problem: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/1-1-what-is-a-social-problem/>.
- Explain how the problem threatens American democracy (or another democracy?).
- Have there been attempts to address the problem? How? By whom? To what end? With what results? Why have these attempts been unsatisfactory in your view?
- Propose a solution to the problem. Explain it and explain why it’s an ethical approach.
- Consider (and discuss) the limitations and potential unintended consequences of your proposed solution. Why is it important to consider unintended consequences? What is an ethical approach to navigating the inevitability of unintended consequences? What would you propose readers consider further to advance your argument? (These questions may be good prompts for your conclusion).
 - For example, if you proposed an ethical design solution, you might discuss the limitations of tech-based solutions and consider how government regulations and/or collective action might be necessary to address the problem(s) that your proposed solution attempts to address.
- Engage meaningfully with credible sources to reference existing conversation(s), scholarly and/or popular, about your issue.

Structure: The arrangement of your essay is up to you to determine using your best logic and judgment, i.e. your sense of what will make your argument most persuasive. However, your essay must include the following structural components:

- Introduction
- Thesis statement
- Argument with support from credible sources
- Sources cited, preferably in MLA 8, but it’s up to you which citation format you use, so long as you are consistent.
- Conclusion

Purpose/Learning Objectives:

- To apply concepts from the course to a relevant issue of personal interest to you

- To practice and demonstrate ethical research and writing
- To dare to imagine hopeful, ethical solutions to existing problems and/or alternatives to existing technologies
- To think critically about one's own imagined solutions and the limitations of one's positionality in addressing specific problems
- To apply rhetorical understanding to present a persuasive, ethical argument

Academic Writing

ENGL101: Section 1104

Fall 2019

Course Description

English 101: Academic Writing is a course in rhetoric. You will learn to ask good questions, conduct effective research, explore possible arguments, consider counter arguments, form your own claims, and then reflect on your position as it takes shape. A major theme of this course is social justice with a focus on you learning to listen and write *across difference*—which means hearing what others have to say who have experiences and hold perspectives different from your own and reflecting thoughtfully on these perspectives as you craft and revise your own ideas and arguments.

The goal of this academic writing course—and your entire education at UMD—is to equip you to participate in the world within and outside the university and to see that issues relating your personal, collegiate, and professional experiences are of social and political significance, too (and vice versa). This semester, you will learn to summarize, analyze, research, inquire, reflect, argue and remediate—rhetorical skills necessary for ethical public engagement, rigorous academic scholarship, and exemplary professional practice. Ultimately, English 101 is a course in which you will learn how to engage in public discussion with generosity and rigor, exploring ways to make positive change in your worlds. English 101 will position you to succeed in your UMD coursework and in today's critical socio-political conversations.

Course Assignments

All of the major assignments in English 101 ask you to think about rhetoric's relationship to issues of public importance and your engagement with these issues. You should note that you will move through two major assignment sequences this semester, meaning that the assignments are connected to one in another in critical ways. The first two assignments are tethered together: for project #1, you will summarize the same essay that you will later analyze in project #2. When you move to project #3, you'll start the second assignment sequence. You will choose an issue to explore for the remainder of the semester. Your Inquiry Presentation, Literature Review, Position Paper, and Public Remediation projects will all ask you to take up the issue you've chosen in different, rhetorically significant ways. While there are two major sequences, all of the projects you'll compose ask you to consider issues of public interest and to explore and work to understand those issues by listening, analyzing, researching, synthesizing, and then, finally, arguing.

Sequence #1

Assignment #1: Summary. The rhetorical strategy of summary is an exercise in listening, and summary is the foundation of all writing in public and academic situations. Summary asks

writers to represent another's argument fully, accurately, and ethically. The Summary assignment depends on your careful reading and thoughtful representation of an argumentative text selected from a bank provided for you. Your audience in this essay is me, your instructor, and your fellow students. 300-350 words.

Assignment #2: Rhetorical Analysis: For this assignment, you will analyze the text you summarized. Your goal is to identify and examine one of the rhetor's rhetorical strategies and explain how this strategy helps to achieve the overarching purpose of the piece. Your analysis will reveal how the rhetor attempts to persuade their audience, whether the rhetor's strategy is effective, and why you think so. Your audience for your rhetorical analysis is interested in the topic of the essay under review but likely has not read or viewed the author's argument. 3 pages.

Sequence #2

For the remaining projects, you will explore an issue of your choosing. Please note: the issue you choose *must* have public or communal significance; that is, you need to choose an issue that is important (or should be important) for members of your communities to consider right now.

Research Mini-Projects. These two projects: (A) Source Grid, Topic Proposal and Source Assessment; (B) Source Examination Worksheet & Reflection and Reflection) are meant to support you as you research and write about your issue. Through these assignments, you will identify sources that enable you to understand the debates within your issue, and you will synthesize and connect the claims people make. The mini-projects span the Inquiry Presentation and the Literature Review.

Assignment #4: Inquiry Presentation. For this assignment, you will offer a 5-minute presentation on the issue you've decided to explore for the remainder of the semester. The criteria for a successful presentation is based on the articulation of the inquiry, engagement with research, identification of exigence, coherence of presentation, and presentation style. Students would be expected to present for 5 minutes and use 3-4 slides or other visuals to anchor their work. Your audience for this assignment is me, your instructor, and your peers in the class. During this unit, you will also conference with me and complete the Stasis Grid assignment.

Assignment #5: Literature Review. For this assignment, you will draw explicitly from 8-10 credible sources about your issue to paint a cohesive, critical, and well-organized picture of the research available about the arguments and debates at stake within this issue. You will need to analyze the available research, present a clear argument about its scope, and-- importantly--forecast your own potential intervention. The Literature Review is a vital springboard for developing your own argument; this is where you move from asking questions that interest you and conducting research to finding a niche for public intervention. The Literature Review creates a foothold for you to respond to the available writing and research and make your own intervention.

Assignment #6: Position Paper. Your goal in this essay is to build on the writing, research, and thinking you conducted for your Annotated Bibliography, Inquiry Presentation, and Digital Forum to offer the argument you find most persuasive within the issue you've been examining. Your job is to take a position within this debate, addressing competing positions and alternatives, and organize your ideas effectively and efficiently. This essay is directed to a specific, academic audience, and it should include a bibliography of approximately 20 sources that you cite or consult. 8-10 pages. Your audience for this essay is an academic audience.

Assignment #7: Public Remediation Project. For your final project of the semester, you will *revise* and *remediate* your position paper for a public audience. The goal here is to identify the audience you want to engage and the modality through which to reach them. You may decide to remediate your position paper as a pamphlet, newsletter, a podcast, an op-ed, a letter to the editor, another genre of your choosing. Whatever format you decide on, the genre should be one that would reach your intended audience and enable you to make the claims you see as important. With your remediation, you will also compose a reflective memo in which you discuss with me how your position has taken shape over the course of the semester, and the decisions you made as you remediated your traditional essay into your remediated genre.

Peer-Review Drafts and Reflective Memos. Throughout this course, you will deepen your understanding of writing as a *process*, and while that process varies for each writer, drafts, feedback, and revision are essential elements for any effective composition. Before most assignments are submitted, you will bring a draft of your project to class and participate in a draft workshop in which you will share your writing with a peer in the class, and that person will offer suggestions for improvement. In addition, after each assignment you will also reflect on what you've completed. You will compose a reflective memo in which you will step back to think critically about your writing process and your developing thinking about your issue. In reflection, you gain the insights that enable you to assess your work and make productive changes towards improvement. These are moments for you to talk with me about your writing triumphs and struggles, and to consider how your position within the issue you've chosen is taking shape.

Sample Syllabus #3: An Introductory Undergraduate Film Course for the January Term

Whose Gaze?: An Intersectional Approach to Film Form and Culture

Engl245/Film245-Wb21, Winter 2021



Image courtesy of David Jonas Frei via Pixabay.

Course Description

In this course, you will learn how to analyze film as a culturally-situated medium of expression and as an art form. To analyze film, you will learn basic film terminology as well as fundamental principles of film form, film narrative, and film criticism.

Intersectional feminist theory will be introduced in week two as one particularly rich analytic tool to help you understand how films and the institution of filmmaking can both resist and perpetuate the status quo (often at the same time!). This course invites you to investigate how filmmakers have used their medium to probe complex questions around humanity, power, meaning-making, and ways of seeing.

Using largely contemporary examples from Hollywood, world cinema, documentary, and independent film, we will examine how film technique and style can be used to respond to cultural exigencies and to produce meaning. By the end of the class, students should be able to look at any given film critically, understand its formal structure, and place it within its broader institutional, economic, and cultural contexts.

This is a course designed to introduce students to the way film scholars think about an important aspect of our social and cultural environment. By looking at this key discipline in the humanities, students will become better acquainted with the ways in which scholars understand and make sense of the medium of film and students will be able to bring a more informed, critical lens to their own media consumption and appreciation.

The Big Questions driving this course are:

- What is the “language” of film? How do films produce meaning?
- How do films use elements of the medium (cinematography, mise-en-scene, pacing, sound, editing, etc) to expand or change the way we think about what “meaning” is?
- What is the relationship between film and the culture in which it is situated? How do films represent, reflect, reproduce, and/or alter the lives and reality of those who consume them?

Please Note: Students should expect to work *very hard* in this 14-day condensed course. We will attempt to cover an entire semester’s worth of material in just *14 days*. Students should prepare to spend *up to 6 hours/weekday* on coursework. This is commensurate with what you would be expected to spend each week of a 15-week semester. Some days are shorter than others and I’ve striven for a course flow that will keep you interested and engaged, but there’s just no way around the fact that this course will make you work.

Assignments and Values

Daily expectations: Each day of this condensed course, students will be expected to read one chapter from the textbook and at least one supplemental reading (sometimes scholarly, sometimes not), watch one feature-length film twice, write one discussion board post, and respond to one peer’s discussion board post from the previous day. I may post supplementary mini-lectures here and there to support your learning, but I will not teach everything in the textbook. That’s what the textbook is for. If you find yourself consistently spending over 6 hours/day, please let me know and I will work with you to figure out how you can streamline the workflow.

The films are primary texts for this class, so careful viewings of them are essential. You should keep a viewing journal (with notes and commentary), which will help you organize and follow up on your initial impressions. You are strongly encouraged to watch the assigned films **at least twice** on the day that each is assigned.

In this and almost any college course, “reading” usually means “reading and annotating.” When I assign a reading, especially in the textbook and scholarly articles, I mean for you to

read *actively* (annotate, jot notes, highlight, keep a running list of terms with definitions, etc) so that you are learning the material, not just glancing at it. With that said, there will be times in the textbook where skimming is sufficient. Do your best to read efficiently by focusing on what seems most relevant to the day's key concepts. Both reading and skimming are practices and skills that you improve by doing... over and over. Honestly, I wasn't a very good reader until graduate school. It's hard work! I encourage you to read for what's important and meaningful to you rather than to try to capture every single concept.

My recommended daily workflow for the course is as follows:

1. Respond to a peer's discussion board post from the previous day.
2. Preview the day's topic and concepts by looking at the syllabus.
3. Watch the assigned film(s).
4. Do the readings, jotting notes on important concepts and whatever strikes you as interesting.
5. Watch the film *a second time*. (You will be amazed at what you notice this time around!)
 1. Please note: I know you all have busy lives and may not always be able to watch twice. If you know you won't be able to watch twice on a given day, I recommend reading the textbook first, then watching the film, then reading the supplementary readings.
6. Write your Discussion Board post.

Discussion Board posts should be a 300-word (approx.) written engagement with the day's materials. You should draw specifically from the day's film and supplementary texts, always citing your sources where appropriate. Some posts have two parts to them.

DB Peer Responses: Your response to your peer's post should include a question or provocation for them to consider. As always, please be kind and generous in the way that you read and respond to your peers. Disagreement is a powerful clarifying tool, so know that you are encouraged to disagree, but please do so from a place of curiosity and respect, rather than antagonism or hostility. Let's assume the best of each other and see where that takes us.

Discussion board posts and peer responses help you deeply learn the material through writing and give you the opportunity to practice film analysis with the terms and concepts you acquire from the readings. Because I expect you to spend a significant portion of your time for the course writing these posts, I have made them worth a proportionate percentage of the final course grade. Prompts are provided by the instructor. Peer responses are worth 1/10th of each DB post grade.

Major assignments: To reinforce and synthesize the concepts you are learning each day, there are three major assignments in addition to the daily discussion board posts: two essays and a glossary assignment. The "Form Analysis Essay" asks you to analyze how the form of a film produces meaning. The "Glossary with Examples" asks you to choose 12 of the many film concepts from the course (at least one from each day) to define and illustrate

using examples from the assigned films. The final “Film and Status Quo” essay asks you to analyze how a film reflects and challenges the status quo of the cultural context from which it hails. More detailed assignment descriptions and grading rubrics are accessible in ELMS > Assignments.

Readings and discussion board posts are each designed to prepare you to succeed on major assignments. If you complete all assignments and engage rigorously with the prompts, you should do well in the course. Please reach out to me if you have any concerns or anxieties about how to succeed in the course. I want you to succeed!

Course Assignments, Deadlines, and Their Values:

1. Discussion Board Posts (~300 words) and Responses (~100 words), daily.....45% of final grade
2. Form Analysis Essay (min. 750 words), Jan 11.....20% of final grade
3. Film and Status Quo Essay Outline, Jan. 15.....5% of final grade
4. Two peer reviews of outline (just 2 comments each), Jan. 19.....part of outline grade
5. Glossary with Examples (12 entries), Jan. 20.....10% of final grade
6. Film and Status Quo Essay (min. 750 words), Jan. 22.....20% of final grade

Evaluation Key

A+ 97-100%	A 94-96%	A- 90-93%	B+ 87-89%	B 84-86%	B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%	C 74-76%	C- 70-73%	D+ 67-69%	D 64-66%	D- 60-63%
F 1 <60%					

A final note on my preferences and expectations as your instructor:

Across your writing, whether in DB posts or substantive essays, please

- Refer to specific passages in the textbook and in the films in your responses.
- Support your claims with examples or specifics from the text and/or film(s).
- Avoid making sweeping generalizations without supporting your claims.
- Feel free to pose questions that arise or linger in your mind as you watch and read.
- Know that this course welcomes inquiry, meaning both the *process* of inquiry (vs product of your inquiry) and an emphasis on open questions rather than final answers. In Discussion Board posts, I would rather see you think *with* a text or film, posing questions, opening a kind of conversation based in your own thinking, than state immovable opinions about the texts that may not be thoroughly researched. To put it in a less formal register, I’m less interested in your takedown of X movie than in you framing the questions that it raises for you and inquisitively considering your own reactions and opinions. Use the discussion boards to think on the page. The thoughts do not need to be Brilliant or Final, but I’d like for them to probe beyond the surface level. Explore what that means to you.

Sample Syllabus #4: An Upper-Level Undergraduate Course for the January term in Women's and Gender Studies

Intersectionality, Epistemological Frames, and Livable Lives

“Race is much more than a fraudulent mask that we have been forced to wear that prevents other people from ‘truly seeing’ who we ‘really’ are...race, gender, and sexuality are ways of knowing that make sense of social reality in the United States.” Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*

Course Overview

What kind of ideological and institutional infrastructure does it take to allow 82% of the world's homicides to occur in the United States? Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the vast majority (81%) of firearm homicides occur in urban areas and that in urban areas on average, Black Americans are eight times more likely to be killed by firearms than Whites (Pahn, Molly, et al.). Upon closer inspection, the data show that while Black death by gun homicide is higher than the rate for Whites in all 50 states, the actual disparity varies greatly depending on the city. For example, in Wisconsin, a Black person in 2015 was **26 times** more likely to be shot and killed than a white person. (Wisconsin also shows the second-highest gap between both Black and White incarceration rates and unemployment rates of all the states.) In Arizona, the disparity between death by homicide is only 3.2 times greater for Blacks than Whites. What kind of ideological and institutional infrastructure does it take for a factor of 3.2 to seem like a *small* disparity between the rates of black and white death by homicide in the United States? While the (White?) national imagination trembles in fear of (brown) “terrorists,” Americans are “128 times more likely to be killed in everyday gun violence than by any act of international terrorism,” and “a black person living in an urban area is almost 500 times more likely to be killed by everyday gun violence than by terrorism” (Pahn, Molly, et al.). What kinds of epistemological frames enable these statistics? What constitutes a livable life in the United States and who has access? How and why is the ontology of Blackness distinct from the ontology of “humanity”?

The course title indicates the three most central themes which the readings and course discussion will elaborate and complicate. My hope is that you will come away from this course with a deepened appreciation for intersectionality as a frame for viewing living conditions in this country; as a methodology for understanding real problems and which informs methods that may be used to address those problems; and as a way into disrupting, challenging, and complicating “identity” (identity as an experience, as a marked subject position, as positionality, and as enabling identification with others). As for “epistemological frames,” I hope you will develop a reflex for thinking metacognitively about *how* you know what you think you know, for questioning the way in which some “knowledge” is taken for granted and other knowledge obscured, silenced, erased. The

coursework should help you challenge your default epistemological frames and think generatively about other frames and ways of knowing. The “livable lives” portion of the title signals the course’s critical engagement with state-sanctioned violence, where White-dominant (we will talk about which name(s) to call them) epistemological frames meet Black bodies to gruesome ends. As an upper level undergraduate course in Women’s Studies, this course presumes some familiarity with various orientations of and approaches to feminism (liberal, radical, Black feminism, essentialist, cultural, post-structural), but please speak up if and whenever a review would be useful.

Work Cited.

Pahn, Molly, et al. “Gun Violence in the US Kills More Black People and Urban Dwellers.” *The Conversation*, *The Conversation*, 17 Sept. 2018, theconversation.com/gun-violence-in-the-us-kills-more-black-people-and-urban-dwellers-86825.

Guiding Course Questions

- How do the categories of race, gender, sexuality, and disability intersect with state-sanctioned violence in the lives of persons living in the United States in 2018?
- How do our notions of the nation and nationality intersect with the way we think and value human lives? How do geography, space, and place impact who and how we value?
- What kinds of conceptual and linguistic frames do we use to think and to see? How do paradigms of race, gender, sexuality, and disability color our frames? Where do these frames come from? Whom do they serve? What do these frames enable and what do they foreclose?
- How do different media shape what we know about what occurs in the United States? Which questions get asked during times of crisis, conflict, or tragedy? Which don’t? What can we discern about the presence and function of bias in the news we consume?
- What is the role of economics in the construction and policing of various identities?
- Please keep a journal of other questions this course raises for you and share with the class as they arise—we will keep a Google doc with course questions.

Major Assignment

Case Study: You will pick one case study at the beginning of the course and compile articles (at least two per week) published concurrently with the event, soon afterwards, more in-depth coverage, longer opinion pieces and/or anything else you see fit. Using rhetorical analysis and the critical apparatus we will discuss in the course, you will analyze how the themes of the course intersect in your case study and to what effect. You will keep a course journal in which you can analyze the artifacts you find and reflect on how you interpret your findings through the frames of the course. At the end of the course, we will do a mini-

conference in which you will have 10 minutes to deliver a presentation to your classmates. What and how you choose to present is up to you—creativity encouraged!

Accounting: Journal: 25%, Presentation 25%

Minor Assignments

By midnight Friday of each week, you will submit a ~500-word response to the week's material. The writing does not need to be beautiful, brilliant, polished, perfect (as if there were such thing as the latter), but it should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings, class discussion, and course themes. You may also use the space to connect findings from your own research project to the coursework.

Accounting: 25%

Course Evaluations

Below, please find screen shots of the comments section from my last three course evaluations, appearing in reverse chronological order.

ENGL293, Writing in the Wireless World – Spring 2022

Comment Items Applied to All Section Instructors

What about the course and/or instruction most enhanced your learning?

Comments
I have never had a teacher give 800 words of feedback to me before! Normally, you get a few sentences maybe or a "good job". Just last week I had my philosophy lecturer state do not send your midterm responses for him to review before the due date. It just goes to show how much respect you have for the students and the class and I appreciate it.
This course was discussion-based which really allowed all students to engage with the class material and readings on a deep level. We were tasked to closely read and engage with around two texts per week which we then had a dialogue on during the class time. We took notes (interesting quotes, insights, and questions prompted by our interaction with the readings) in a virtual reading journal that we could reference in class during discussions. We additionally completed super unique projects to demonstrate our comprehension of the key takeaways from each unit. One interesting project included creating a podcast episode interviewing two people in our lives and their experiences with social media and technology. Another interesting project included creating a zine informing a larger audience of the main societal consequences of social media and technology.
I think this course was very fun and informative. The readings we got were long but really interesting, we always talked about the readings and connected them to the course. The grading method allowed me to be way more creative than other english classes.
The ability to be creative with my work and assignments helped enhanced my learning as well as writing reflections after submitting every assignment. Writing the reflection helped me evaluate myself and see the parts where I was lacking and where I could do better and Britt helped us understand every assignment.
I enjoyed this class very much. It was probably one of my top 2 favorite classes this semester. Britt is a terrific professor and cares deeply about her students and the class. I felt like I learned a lot and all the information is very applicable to my daily life. Discussion were great and I enjoyed the class structure.
I liked that there was an emphasis on doing the work simply to do the work, as compared to doing work for a grade.
The ungrading method, and the fact that following the rubric wasn't the most important thing for the class
The grading curriculum which allowed more creativity and explorative processes.
the weekly reading and class discussion
The freedom we had with a lot of the assignments and the suggestion for what we think we deserve as a grade really inspired me to do well in this course and enhanced my learning
The professor was constantly engaging us and pushing us to say anything that comes to us
great teacher, how she taught the course information

ENGL245, Film Form and Culture – Winter 2021

Additional comments (e.g. about course content/materials, teaching style, etc.):

Comments
The course was great. Dr. Starr held me accountable, and she gave feedback on every assignment. Good and bad.
Ms. Brittany Starr is one of the best professor at UMD. I'm glad I got to take her class during the winter and one thing that may help this course is giving quizzes once in a while instead of discussion posts.
Professor Britt was extremely compassionate and caring towards her students, making it obvious that she actually wanted us to learn and enjoy the course, not just complete it. As her first asynchronous course, she did an efficient job (more than my other professors) at communicating and staying in touch. She was accommodating to personal issues that caused delays in the course, within reason, and worked out any kinks in confusion for assignments. She also was the first professor I had that published videos that helped explain assignments or just general check in videos, which was very appreciated and helpful. Great course, I'd take another class just to have her as a professor again!
I truly enjoyed this course. The main reason I took this course was because I felt it would help boost my GPA. It definitely has not been an "easy A" due to the high volume of work and intense films that are assigned but it truly pushed me to challenge my work ethic and opened my mind up to a potential career in film at some point in my future career. I loved Britt as an instructor. She allowed us time and space to understand the material and unpack the films and prompts. This course discusses very heavy and loaded topics that I had not yet covered in my first semester at UMD. I think the amount of work was sufficient for a winter course however I would have appreciated a lighter amount of work due on the days that essays and big assignments were due because it definitely added more stress than necessary for a two week course. I loved this course overall and if there were another one similar with different topics in film available I would definitely take it, especially if Britt is teaching!

ENGL293, Writing in the Wireless World – Fall 2020

Additional comments (e.g. about course content/materials, teaching style, etc.):

Comments
If I were given the option to take this course again, I would enroll without hesitation. The teaching and learning style was extremely helpful and always brought out the intellect in each and every student. This course is extremely well structured and I would recommend to every student in the institution.
Britt Starr is one of the best professors I have ever had, if not the best. She was kind, understanding, and always pushed to challenge us intellectually. She always asks the question to push us to take one step further in our responses and come out with something truly substantial. 10/10 professor.
The course content was really engaging, interesting and prominent especially in an online environment. Given the circumstances, this was one of my favorite classes to attend because of the course material, professor, and the course load was never too overwhelming.
As one of my favorite classes at UMD, this class far exceeded my expectations. Professor Starr always challenged us to raise and attempt to answer difficult questions. Her lesson plans were always thorough and well-organized. It was very evident how passionate she was about the course material and her students. She was very accommodating to student needs during this challenging semester.
Professor Starr was an exceptional teacher who was able to break down complex topics regarding communication, writing, and digital technology in a remote online-formatted class. She was very open to discussion and questions and treated students with the utmost respect. The course structure was straightforward and easily understandable when it came to the goals of each lesson. My only critique is the required material of the course, Citizen: An American Lyric, wasn't used as much as expected. The book was only referenced for a brief period of time and the course would've been as effective without it. Nonetheless, it was an additional resource for us and did not affect the quality of the class to a great extent.

Teaching Awards

Below, please find my award notification letters from three recent teaching awards, appearing in reverse chronological order.

Writing Programs Award for Social Justice and Antiracist Teaching (\$400), Spring 2022



Brittany Noelle Starr <bstarr@umd.edu>

Congratulations: Writing Programs Award for Social Justice and Antiracist Teaching and Tutoring

Jessica Enoch <jenoch1@umd.edu>

Mon, May 9, 2022 at 12:25 PM

To: Brittany Noelle Starr <bstarr@umd.edu>, Scott Colin Eklund <seklund@umd.edu>, Shannon Renee Bobbitt <sbobbitt@umd.edu>, Vessela Valiavitcharska <vvaliav@umd.edu>, Scott Wible <swible@umd.edu>

Dear Britt,

Congratulations! Your application was selected for the Writing Programs Award for Social Justice and Antiracist Teaching and Tutoring! We were so impressed with your innovative teaching and the ways you are engaging the Writing Programs' investments in social justice and antiracism! We're thrilled to recognize your excellent teaching practice.

We've cc-ed Shannon Bobbitt who will process your \$400 award. Thanks, Shannon.

With sincere appreciation from the judges,

Vessela, Scott, and Jess

—

Dr. Jessica Enoch
Professor of English
Director of Academic Writing
pronouns: she/her/hers
jenoch1@umd.edu

Robinson Teaching Award (\$150), UMD English Department, Spring 2021



Brittany Noelle Starr <bstarr@umd.edu>

Robinson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

Associate Chair English Department (SHARED) <assoc-chair-engl@umd.edu>

Tue, May 11, 2021 at 12:13 PM

To: Brittany Noelle Starr <bstarr@umd.edu>

Cc: Shannon Renee Bobbitt <sbobbitt@umd.edu>, Jessica Enoch <jenoch1@umd.edu>, Nabila Abdullah Hijazi <nhijazi@umd.edu>, "Scott A. Trudell" <trudell@umd.edu>

Dear Britt,

On behalf of the selection committee, I am pleased to tell you that you are one of the three recipients of the James A. Robinson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. The committee was impressed by your commitment and skill and by the impact you have had on your students. Rarely have we seen comments on graduate student evaluations as overwhelmingly supportive and excited as yours are.

You truly stand out as a teacher, and it is clear to us that you helped the students to feel seen and become more invested in our discipline. You bring an energy to the classroom that sparks curiosity and interest in a way that is unparalleled. The investment in the "havruta" practice of peer-guided text study sounds like a wonderful way to engage students and we can see the benefits that get realized each day in your classroom. Your students feel as if you have changed their lives. You are a model teacher, and we appreciate all that you do and bring to the department.

We will make a formal announcement of the prize winners on the department's website and the prize will also be announced at the departmental graduation ceremony later in May. The award comes with a \$150 stipend, which will be added to your paycheck.

Many congratulations.

Sincerely,

Kellie (and the selection committee: Jess Enoch, Nabila Hijazi, Scott Trudell)

(Nominated) Donna B. Hamilton Teaching Award, Spring 2020



Brittany Starr <bnstarr@gmail.com>

Donna B. Hamilton Teaching Awards

William A. Cohen <deanugst@umd.edu>
Reply-To: deanugst@umd.edu
To: Bstarr <bstarr@umd.edu>
Cc: Abailey <abailey7@umd.edu>

Thu, May 7, 2020 at 1:48 PM

Dear Professor Starr,

The Office of Undergraduate Studies sponsors two campus-wide teaching awards each year, and I am pleased to let you know that you were among those nominated for your work in ENGL101. Awards are based solely on student nominations and are solicited from across campus.

We had many outstanding nominations and although you were not selected to win the award, I wanted to let you know that one or more of your students was sufficiently grateful to write a letter of nomination on your behalf.

I would say that she was a wonderful professor, who inspired me to look at the big picture and the many different opportunities and paths that come from something, not just a global issue, but in my personal life as well, as I've been looking for my personal interests and aspirations.

I would say that she was a wonderful professor, who inspired me to look at the big picture and the many different opportunities and paths that come from something, not just a global issue, but in my personal life as well, as I've been looking for my personal interests and aspirations.

If you are interested in the awards announcement, it can be found on our [website](#). Thank you for contributing so much to our undergraduate students' education. We and they value your involvement.

Sincerely,

William A. Cohen
Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies
Professor of English
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742