

# Portfolio Preview

**Fifth Edition**

Information about and Samples of English 101 Portfolio Essays from  
Spokane Falls Community College

Portfolio Preview

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Dear English 101 Student:

SFCC is committed to the idea that students must write clearly and effectively if they are to succeed in college and in the professional world. For that reason, composition instructors engage in a department-wide form of student evaluation called portfolio assessment. Since 1990, our English 101 students have assembled portfolios of their written work to demonstrate their mastery of collegiate writing. This assessment allows students to satisfy SFCC's writing requirement on the basis of their best writing, writing they've had a chance to think about and revise, and it helps English instructors to increase the consistency of their grading.

At midterm and quarter's end, your work will be read by other English instructors to determine whether your writing meets minimum standards for completing English 101 with a C. At midterm, we read a single essay as a “dry run” to inform you of the standards we apply. In the final portfolio, we read three essays: two revised essays (one using multiple sources) and a Reflective letter about your growth as a writer. Revised papers have a cover sheet describing the writing assignment, what you regard as successful in the essay, and your writing process.

When English faculty meet to read portfolios, they decide which ones meet the department's standards of competency. To earn a C (2.0) or higher in the course, your portfolio must pass. You may not enroll in an advanced composition class (English 102 or 105) with a C-. If your portfolio passes, you are not guaranteed a C; your grade is affected by other factors such as missing assignments, poor attendance, late or unsatisfactory work. It is therefore essential that you observe the policies your instructor outlines on the syllabus.

Although most of us dislike the sword of judgment hanging over our heads, many students have enjoyed receiving recognition for the papers they have created and polished during the quarter from a teacher who reads them with a fresh eye. Still, students are bound to be a bit nervous about their writing, so we have assembled this collection of SFCC portfolio essays. These anonymous essays are published exactly as they were submitted -mistakes and all- and with the writers' permission. We hope you find these examples instructive since they provide local rather than textbook examples of polished writing, and the criteria used to assess your writing.

We believe that department-wide evaluation benefits you. Students are well served when they learn to write for a particular audience and reflect on that achievement. Students are well served when faculty agree about what constitutes good college writing. The enterprise of higher education is well served when the participants talk openly about performance standards and when teachers help learners discover how to meet those standards for themselves. We are happy you share this learning enterprise with us!

Sincerely,

Barbara Simmons, Director of Composition

Connie Scott, English Department Chair

## Sample Exemplary Cover Letter (received a Pass rating)

Dear Portfolio Reader,

I was very excited this quarter to be taking an English Class. Writing is something that has always come relatively easy to me. With that being said, I would not say that I am always good at it. I would like to think that I have some natural ability with my writing however, that may just be a misunderstanding of my genuine love of writing and the pride I take in what I write. I am continually excited to learn about writing and how to improve the art. I would consider myself a bit of a stubborn writer. I choose my words carefully and with a great deal of thought. It sometimes is difficult for me to change that part of my writing, as I become very attached to those words. I have worked very hard this quarter to improve my writing. Though I would not say my writing, with regards to my words, specifically has changed this quarter, my revision process, structure, and overall organization has greatly improved.

Revision is a concept that I was familiar with, however it was not something that we practiced in High School. I am not sure that before this class I had ever really revised a paper. For the midterm myth paper I had a total of 4 revisions. Revision three to four were multiple edits revised at once. I generally have a good idea where my paper needs revision, but am unsure exactly how to do so. One example of this is in my final draft.

The writing tutor suggested that I break my final paragraph into two paragraphs. I had felt that it was a little unorganized and jumped around a little too much, but was unsure what to do about this. The tutor helped me to see that I had intermingled my analysis and conclusion into one paragraph and that they would be much better suited as two, one analysis and one conclusion. I separated the analysis sentences from the conclusive sentences and added more to both. In the analysis I added more examples. One such example added is “There are also pressures to join cultural groups in college. These groups are important because they remind

people of who they are and where they come from, but they also add a degree of segregation by separating students into special groups” (2004). This sentence would not have existed if I had not seen the tutor and been advised to separate the analysis from the conclusion. It is an important example to support my thesis in this paper. Learning how to fully utilize the revision process and understanding how to benefit the most from the revision resources available has made a significant improvement in my overall paper quality.

Before this class I was completely unaware of MLA. I did not even know what it was. I knew that work needed to be cited and that papers needed to have a format, but I had no idea what that was. An example of how I used this in my paper is when I cited the myth. There were several authors and I had no idea how to correctly cite them. I learned that the appropriate citation in this case was “(Mckay et al.)” as Mckay was the first author of four. Learning how to do this correctly was of great importance to me. I feel that proper respect should be shown to all writers. This has been very valuable to me, not only to show due respect, but also to protect myself from accidental plagiarism.

My organization has also greatly improved. Learning how to structure a paper so that it is the most organized has been very helpful. In the case with this paper, “A Stand Against the Standard”, having a general outline in advance helped me to stay on track. I have always done a really rough informal outline for all of my papers, but with this paper I really needed my arguments to be clear and on track. I made a more formal outline of the arguments I wanted to use and kept my sources in order throughout. This helped my writing greatly as I could reference that outline and those sources easily during the writing process. Staying organized and staying on topic is essential for me to be able to write an informative or argumentative paper. Learning to improve these skills has helped me to write a paper that is organized and

clear to understand.

I am very proud of this paper. I went from liking my paper to not really liking my paper to loving my paper and being proud of it. This is my fifth draft of this paper. I am certain that this paper could be revised more, in that all papers can continue to be revised indefinitely, and I expect that it is not perfect. However, I feel that this is a great paper. There are no parts of the paper that I feel are not up to par. I am looking forward to you reading this paper. Good or bad I will still be proud of this paper.

Writing has always been an outlet for me and a huge part of who I am. Writing is something that I love. Even when I start a writing project and get to a point where I think it is bad and need to give up, there is always a turning point where I start to fall in love with what I have written. Learning more about the revision process, taxonomy, and overall organization has made me a better writer. I am certain that I will use the skills I have learned in this course for the rest of my writing days.

Thank you for your time,  
[Student # XXX-XXXXXX]

#### Work Cited

Doe, Jane. "A Little Platypus in Each of Us" Unpublished Essay 04 May 2013



Sample Cover Letter—Problematic (received a  
Not Passing rating)

Dear portfolio reader

Thank you for taking the time to read my English 101 final portfolio. I have worked very hard this quarter and I really hope that it shows in my writing. When I was given my first assignment I immediately felt like I was in over my head because of my complete lack of writing experience, but after my second paper I could clearly see the improvement in my work. Thanks largely to the help that I received from my instructor and peers I now have become more confident in my essays. I feel that I have improved the most in key areas like the overall organization of my essays, staying on topic, and I think I improved a lot with my use of quote integrations.

One of the biggest problem that I noticed I had was lack of organization. My papers appeared very choppy and some of the paragraphs where; for lack of a better word, wondering idiots. My paragraphs where just roaming around my papers with no real place or purpose. I could not believe that I never noticed how bad it was, but it made me determined not to make that mistake again. I later learned how to take constructive criticism from my peers; something that I use to ignore, to help me improve my writing process. With the feedback that I received by my peers and lessons that I received from my instructor I feel that my work is noticeably showing improvement.

I remember receiving my first paper back from my instructor and seeing 61% on it. This was a huge blow to my ego because I worked so hard on it and thought that it was a good paper. Come to find out it was a very well writing paper indeed, but I went off topic and that's why I ended up with such a bad score. This was a big eye opener for me and after reading it over again I could see what my instructor was talking about. Now that I have been made aware of my tendency's to drift off subject I can see my ability to stay on topic improving, and hopefully you will too.

Another thing that noticeably needed improvement was my use of quote integrations. I found it really difficult to cite a quote without having it seem like I had just thrown it in there. This was something that only got better with practice and that's where my drafts came into play. With each draft I would try to find more clever ways to integrate my quote until it appeared seamless. I really hope that this is something that shines through because it was so hard for me to get the hang of.

The time that I spent in English 101 has been a great experience for me. English was a subject that I originally didn't even like, but it ended up being one of my favorite classes. I went from someone who has barely written down anything more than a few words at a time in their life to someone who can write a legible essay, and I'm pretty proud of that. I truly believe that I have improved and grew as a writer, but of course this is up for you to decide. I would like to thank you again for your time. I hope that my writing is not to boring and you at least find my work to be somewhat amusing, if nothing else.

## Sample Essays—Exemplary (received a Pass rating)

## Exemplary Essay 1: “Internet Appeal”

### Internet Appeal

Do you ever get the feeling that you need to be doing a hundred things at once? What if this was all due to your use of the internet? The dozens of blinking ads and pop-ups that appear while we use the internet may be causing us to think in a scattered manner. Like the pages of the Web, our minds are cluttered full of snippets of information and conversations. In his article “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” Nicholas Carr explains that our diminished capacity for concentration may be linked to our use of the internet.

### Summary

Carr claims that the more we use the internet, the more diminished our capacity for concentration becomes. He mentions his observation that his concentration “often starts to drift after two or three pages” of a long stretch of text, and he gets distracted and looks for other things to do. He notes that the use of the Internet for research and entertainment is quick and easy and we often only require a few minutes to find what we need. His theory is that because of this quick, easy access to information, the way our minds work has been altered. Search engines and text messaging mean we concentrate for only short periods of text and brief pieces of information. He complains that this has caused us to lose our ability to concentrate. Carr offers the observations of his friends who say they have also noticed this inability to focus for long stretches; he includes the confession of a blogger, Scott Karp, who bemoans the fact that he has “stopped reading books altogether.” Carr applies a pathologist, Bruce Friedman’s comment that his thoughts have taken on a “‘staccato’ quality” that comes from his quick access to online sources.

Carr admits that anecdotes don't prove anything but pushes on, outlining a research program done by the University College London where they examined the logs of two research sites that documented the behavior of visitors. The logs showed that visitors used a sort of "skimming activity," not staying on one source for long and rarely returning previously visited sources. Carr says that we might be reading now more than ever but that it's "a different kind of reading" (58). Maryanne Wolf, an author and psychologist at Tufts University, says the style of reading we use "puts 'efficiency' and 'immediacy' above all else". She worries that this has caused the connections in our brain, formed during deep reading, to become unused and unengaged. Because we have to teach ourselves to read, Wolf states that the neural circuits of our brains are shaped by how and what we read. The connections vary between the ones made by reading and the ones formed when we use the Net. This all comes from our brains' being "infinitely malleable" (58). Our minds have a knack for quickly and constantly reprogramming themselves.

Carr uses the statement of the sociologist Daniel Bell who says that our minds take on the qualities of the technologies that we use. When the clock came along, our minds started to disassociate time and human events. We began to think of our brains as acting "like clockwork". Since the internet came along, we now think of our minds as operating like computers. It has consumed every medium we have given it and it uses them to "scatter our attention and diffuse our concentration" with colorful, blinking ads and headlines. The Net has also forced the older independent media to alter and follow new rules. Shortly after the typewriter became popular, the young Frederick Winslow Taylor took a stop watch into a steel plant and began his historic experiment with some of the workers, figuring out his algorithm for determining the most efficient way to do something. The workers complained about being turned into "little more

than automatons” (62). Taylorism, as it became known, sought maximum speed, efficiency, and output and we still use it today. However, where Taylor wanted to create a “Utopia” and put the machine before man, we now seek to make them one in the same. Sergey Brin and Larry Page, who founded Google while in college, frequently mention their desire to turn the search engine into an “artificial intelligence” and how it might be “connected directly to our brains”. Brin and Page have been attempting to work on artificial intelligence on a “large scale”. Their assumption that we would be “better off” with supplemented intelligence has been called “unsettling”. The human brain has been called an “outdated computer”.

Carr tells us that it is an economic interest for companies to use ads and headlines to distract us and cause our attention to scatter. The internet has, in the words of Socrates from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, caused us to be “filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom” (63). Carr admits to his skepticism and states that, while people have been worried about new technology before, they don’t think long term to the benefits that these technologies would bring. He is optimistic that maybe the internet will “spring a golden age of [...] universal wisdom”. But he also recounts that deep thinking is important to acquiring the knowledge of an author’s works and the “intellectual vibrations” they set off in our own minds. Maryanne Wolf argued, “Deep reading is indistinguishable from deep thinking.” The Playwright Richard Foreman said we risk becoming “pancake people” as the Net spreads us thin and we connect only with the surface of information. Carr goes back to his *2001: A Space Odyssey* example and contrasts the characters of HAL and Dave Bowman. He says that the most human character in the movie ends up being the machine while the actual humans go about their day in an almost machine like fashion of efficiency. Carr labels the people as emotionless as we become so reliant on computers to interpret our world that our own minds “[flatten] into

artificial intelligence” (63).

## Rhetorical Analysis

The philosopher Aristotle observed political speeches, noting they rest on the three appeals of ethos, pathos and logos. The first of these appeals, ethos, is the use of ethical appeal to convince through the character of the speaker or author. Nicholas Carr leaves no questions about what he thinks the internet is doing to our thinking, but he also encourages us to question his skepticism because he also sees the benefits that the internet has brought. Because the internet is so widely used, Carr makes a valid point. Some might think he’s a “worrywart,” as Carr himself states. However, his use of Maryanne Wolf’s statement that the internet puts “‘efficiency’ and ‘immediacy’ above all else” shows that we may have a plausible reason to be wary of the internet. Carr makes no assumptions that he knows exactly what will happen with continued use of the Net. He simply gives his own observations and lets us make our own decisions.

Carr uses pathos to attract his readers by using his example of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The scene he uses puts forth a feeling of apprehension towards the use of machines. As Carr mentions later in the article using Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the founders of Google, humans seek to make themselves and the things around them better. The founders themselves think that humans would be “better off” if our brains were supplemented or replaced by artificial intelligence. For the most part, Carr tries to instill a sense of fear in the over use of machines and technology. On the other hand, though, he does present the merits of technology in moderation.

Logos, being the appeal of logic, is the most common appeal in writing. Carr presents

the study done by the University College London. They tracked two sites the logged the activity of visitors. They noticed a “skimming activity” in the way they bounced from site to site. Also, Carr taps into the psychologist Maryanne Wolf’s knowledge that what and how we read shapes the connections between the circuits in our brains. Carr argues that as our minds become attuned to the attention scattering design of the internet, the connections in our brains become “reprogrammed” and we can no longer access the kind of deep thinking that used to come so naturally.

For me the most compelling argument Carr makes is when he uses pathos, the appeal to emotion. I agree with him that we rely too often on the immediacy of the internet and we have begun to use it to govern our lives. For me the fear of becoming too attached to technology is real. I see my friends and my brother living every minute of their lives with their phones in hand. I don’t want my life to turn into 2001 where my days are an efficient algorithm of actions and everything is controlled by the technology around us. Carr’s statement that the internet has caused our concentration to diminish is completely credible. Even I feel that when I’m not sitting in front of a computer my life is out of whack. I need that connection to the internet to be able to function even if it’s just for help at school. This article has opened my eyes so that I feel almost obligated to unplug from technology. Carr doesn’t ask us to believe him or trust him and that is what makes me want to do just that. I agree with him that the internet has both many benefits as well as some detriments. I believe it is wise to take some time and do something that requires you to slow down and enjoy what the world has to offer.



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## Exemplary Essay 2: “Prohibition Madness”

### English 101 Portfolio Essay Cover Sheet

#### **What was the assignment?**

Well, you did such a bang-up job on the policy development team that you have confused the mayor (or whatever level of official you actually dealt with in Paper 3)! He now doesn't know what to believe. So, he's come back to you to ask you to develop your arguments on one side of your issue more fully and convince him that that side of the argument is correct. In other words, your job will be to persuade the Mayor to take a stand on the issue you presented in Paper 3. Note: you may, of course, switch to a public figure at the level appropriate to your topic. For this paper, I would like you to choose a side of a public, controversial issue and write a persuasive paper that convinces the audience, at least for a moment, that the argument you are making is the truth. Really think about why someone would believe the way the paper indicates and try to get that across to your audience. A well-written paper will be one that takes into account the opposition. Your audience for this paper is at very best neutral to your position; mostly likely, your audience is slightly hostile. 3.5-5 pages. Your paper must cite at least 4 credible, academic sources, at least one of which is new to this piece.

#### **Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.**

What I consider to be most successful is the overall organization of the essay and the transitions between paragraphs.

#### **Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, and what changes did you make?**

After the first draft, I had peers from my class read my essay to see if it was persuasive or if I missed any important counter arguments. I then revised based on the feedback I received. Next, my instructor looked over it with me and offered some suggestions to help my paper, and I revised again based on those suggestions.

## Prohibition Madness

The government did a pretty good job tricking the American public. They made the population believe that marijuana is a horribly dangerous drug that will, at best, turn you into a deviant and at worst cause psychosis or even death. Propaganda films such as *Reefer Madness* released in the 1930's, told incredible stories about how smoking just one joint at a party can lead to rape, murder, insanity, and suicide. Nobody wants their children exposed to terrifying drugs such as this. The fact is, however, marijuana is not nearly as horrible as those movies would have you believe. Prohibition of the drug has cost the United States billions of dollars and thousands of lives, all over a drug that is no more dangerous than alcohol or tobacco. It is time for the federal government to legalize marijuana.

Marijuana prohibition has been a dismal failure. All it accomplished was increasing violent crime and yet, marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug. Instead of eliminating a market, it created a black market. A black market economy creates crime and corruption. Jeffery Miron, a professor of economics at Harvard University states, “ Because participants in illegal markets cannot resolve disputes with non violent mechanisms like courts and lawyers, they use guns instead; thus prohibition increases violent crime” (Miron). The crime related to the Mexican drug cartels has been well documented. Greg Campbell writes in his book, *Blunt Trauma*, about the war on drugs going on in Mexico stating, “In Mexico, the drug war is not metaphorical, as it is in the United States. There, it means 49 headless bodies dumped on a highway, chainsaw beheadings posted on You Tube, and full-scale battles among drug cartels and the military with civilians mowed down in the crossfire” (Campbell). What is really scary is that some of that crime is spilling across the border into the United States. A lot of people don't think about drug cartels when thinking about marijuana. People usually associate drug cartels with more expensive drugs such as cocaine and heroin, but that is not the case. Campbell writes “In 2010, Mexican

officials estimated that cannabis now provides the cartels with as much as half of their revenue” (Campbell). He then goes on to quote Jeff Sweetin, the former special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Denver field office as saying, “It has always been the type of drug trafficking that generated the most amount of money for the distributors” (Campbell). Prohibition has created a violent atmosphere just like it did in the 1920’s during alcohol prohibition. If we legalize marijuana we could dramatically decrease the crime associated with the prohibition of marijuana.

The violent crime and drug cartels associated with prohibition costs the United States billions of dollars yearly, but if we were to legalize marijuana, we would see a huge positive economic impact. Jeffery Miron writes, “Prohibition entails direct enforcement costs. If marijuana were legal, enforcement costs would be zero and governments could levy taxes on the production and sale of marijuana” (Miron). Enforcing prohibition is expensive; there are police, prosecutor, and prison expenses associated with enforcement. Miron states that “marijuana legalization would reduce government expenditures by roughly \$8 billion annually.” Miron then states that in a 2007 study from George Mason University that reports “Lost revenue from failing to tax a \$113 billion business, as well as costs incurred enforcing marijuana laws, cost U.S. taxpayers \$41.8 billion yearly” (Miron). Legalizing would also create jobs. Citizens could open up shops or cafes. Ending the prohibition of marijuana would create revenue, and at the same time, the cost associated with enforcement would vanish, thus having a positive economic impact.

Prohibitionist argue that the increased cost from legalization, due to physical illnesses and psychological problems associated with the drug, would negate any money savings that legalization would have; however, the negative effects associated with marijuana have been grossly overstated. Greg Campbell states, “Marijuana may be one of the safest intoxicants know

to man. In thousands of years in unregulated use, there has not been a single known fatality attributable to overdose” (Campbell). Dave Smith echoes this point in an article he wrote for International Business Times called “Medical Marijuana: 10 Health Benefits That Legitimize Legalization.” Smith quotes Dr. Lester Grinspoon, a professor emeritus at Harvard Medical School saying, “There are no deaths from cannabis use. Anywhere. You can't find one. Meanwhile, it's a fact that anyone can die from ingesting too much aspirin, or too much coffee, or too much wine” (Smith). Young adults heading to college could die from binge drinking, but they cannot die from smoking too much marijuana. The addictiveness of marijuana has also been overstated. NORML, an organization committed to providing a voice for those opposed to prohibition states,

“The majority of epidemiological and animal data demonstrate that the reinforcing properties of marijuana in humans are low in comparison to other drugs of abuse, including alcohol and nicotine. According to the U.S. Institute of Medicine (IOM), fewer than one in 10 marijuana smokers become regular users of the drug, and most voluntary cease their use after 34 years of age. By comparison, 15 percent of alcohol consumers and 32 percent of tobacco smokers exhibit symptoms of drug dependence”

(“Marijuana”).

The U.S. government has overstated the negative effects of marijuana. It is no more dangerous or addictive than tobacco or alcohol. Because we now know that marijuana is not nearly as harmful as was once thought, it is time to remove its illegal status.

Not only is it relatively safe, it also has well documented medicinal value. Dave Smith quotes Dr. Tom Mikuriya, a former national administrator of the U.S. Government's marijuana

research program, when he states, “After dealing with about 10,000 patients in the last 15 years, I’d say about 200 different medicinal conditions respond favorably to cannabis” (Smith).

Patients suffering from diseases such as Alzheimer’s, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, and arthritis all find relief when using marijuana. Smith states in his article that,

“Though the drug is illegal in the U.S., the FDA and American Cancer Society agree that the active ingredients in marijuana, or cannabinoids, have been approved by officials to ‘relieve nausea and vomiting and increase appetite in people with cancer and AIDS.’ The American Cancer Society says that ‘marijuana has anti-bacterial properties, inhibits tumor growth, and enlarges the airways, which they believe can ease the severity of asthma attacks’” (Smith).

Sure, there are legitimate medications that doctors can prescribe, but a lot of these medications have horrible side effects ranging from night sweats to death. Marijuana has virtually none. Smith writes, “Prescription drugs, while legal, are experimental, dangerous, and often toxic. Prescription drugs continue to kill tens of thousands of Americans each year; meanwhile, marijuana has never been the direct contributor to a single death” (Smith). Also, marijuana is relatively cheap compared to prescription drugs. This would be highly beneficial to people who are uninsured or underinsured. Ending prohibition on marijuana could potentially help ease the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Americans battling often times debilitating diseases.

Prohibitionists have many concerns about the legalization of marijuana. They argue that if marijuana were to be readily available, we would have a society of lazy, nonproductive citizens. I don't believe that would be the case. Do we currently have a society of drunkards because alcohol is legal? Sure, there would be some people who would form a dependence on the drug, just like there are some who have a problem with alcohol abuse, but that would be the exception and not the rule. Marijuana has been shown to be about as addictive as caffeine

("Addictiveness"). Another concern is that marijuana is unhealthy and bad for the lungs like smoking cigarettes, but according to the Journal of the American Medical Association, smoking marijuana may not be harmful on the lungs after all. In fact, reports show that casual marijuana smokers might even have stronger lungs than those non smokers. Rupert Shepherd, who writes for Medical News Today, reported the findings "There is good evidence that occasional marijuana use can cause an increase in lung airflow rates and lung volume" (Shepherd).

Shepherd quotes one of the study's co-authors as saying, "Even at daily usage levels of one joint per day over seven years, people were not seeming to have any degradation of lung capacity or function" (Shepherd). It appears that the smoke from marijuana is not nearly as harmful as the smoke from tobacco. Those against legalization will argue that they don't want kids having access to marijuana. This is a valid concern. Marijuana, like alcohol and tobacco, is not for children. That is why there would be the same restrictions on marijuana that we currently have on alcohol and tobacco. Prohibitionists have some valid concerns; however I don't believe they are enough to allow the government to keep this substance illegal.

Prohibition of Marijuana has not worked. Like with alcohol in the 1920's, all it did was make gangsters millionaires. States such as Colorado and Washington have already declared personal possession and consumption by adults to be legal, while 17 other states have made it legal for medical use; however, it is still illegal under federal law, and these states are in direct violation of federal law. Citizens are in jeopardy of receiving federal drug charges while they are breaking no laws in their own state. Federal drug charges are enough to ruin someone's life. A student could lose their financial aid. Teachers, firefighters, and other valuable public servants could lose their jobs. A federal criminal record stays with a person forever, so finding future employment would be difficult. More than half of American voters are in favor of full legalization, while 83 percent of Americans are in favor of allowing a doctor to prescribe it. It is obvious that the public perception of marijuana has changed drastically since the days of Reefer

Madness, and rightly so, considering the new information that is now available concerning the safety of this once demonized plant. It is time for marijuana to be legal again in the United States.



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## Exemplary Essay 3: “Smell: An Emotional Window to Our Memories”

### Assignment

You've now had the opportunity to write two essays of literary analysis, focusing on some poems that caught your attention from among all those we've read so far. Now we want to give you an opportunity to write about a subject that reading a poem made you curious about, curious enough to want to learn more.

#### Writing Task:

For this paper, choose one poem that introduced you to something you didn't know about before and would like to learn more about now. In other words, use the poem as a springboard to further learning; you'll research this topic and write an informative report about the subject that the poem introduced you to. This time, you'll briefly explain the overall poem in the intro, with most of the body of the essay presenting a fully developed and well detailed (therefore, truly informative ) report. In the penultimate paragraph, return to the poem, and discuss how your newfound knowledge helps deepen your understanding of the poem; quote a few lines or passages of the poem to illustrate your points. The concluding paragraph will sum up all these ideas about the subject you researched and the poem.

#### Some ideas:

- In his poem, “Midwest,” Dunn introduces us to a painting by David Ahlsted, and in “The Hell Mural,” Wallace describes a painting by Iri and Toshi Maruki; for this assignment, you could research one of these artists.
- In Olds’s poem “The Missing Boy,” she presents the story of Etan Patz and how this boy’s disappearance affected her son. If this poem were your spring board, you could explore the problem of child abductions in our country or the effect knowledge of dangers like these has on children.
- In her poem, “Night of the Living, Night of the Dead,” Addonizio writes of zombies and our fascination with them, a popular subject for research. What does our culture’s love of zombies and monsters reveal about us?
- In Hoagland’s collection, he includes two poems about literary figures, Auden and Lawrence, and each of these poems becomes more powerful when you know more about the literary figure he is celebrating.
- Zeller's poem, “O Give You Ten Reasons Why We Can't Use Roundup on Our Lawns” raises questions about how we should treat our natural world. This poem could be a springboard into research on the effects of pesticides and herbicides on our food and the health ramifications.
- Each of the book club collections presents ecological, historical, or cultural topics worthy of further research. We’ll brainstorm a list of topics in class to help get your ideas flowing.

Requirements: Refer to one poem you've read in our class this quarter, a poem that makes you want to learn more about the subject of the poem. Then, find at least two or three outside sources to help you learn about that subject and to provide you with the information to develop your body paragraphs. Only one source may be a web site found via Google. Your other source or sources must be academic sources located via one of our library's data bases.

101 students: You must have a minimum of two sources, and your final essay must be at least six paragraphs long in 3-4 pages (4 pages is best}, plus a works cited page.

102 and 238 students: You must use a minimum of three sources, and your final essay must be 5 to 6 pages, plus a works cited page.

Purposes:

To deepen your appreciation of poetry as a lens on the world. To craft an informative report or a convincing argument using a variety of credible and reliable sources. To use textual evidence to support a claim. To manipulate text using MLA citations.

Audience: Your classmates, teachers, and other English faculty at SFCC

## Smell: An Emotional Window to Our Memories

During our book club meetings for our poetry class, we were reading Naomi Shihab Nye's book *Red Suitcase*, at which time we came upon a poem called "Yeast" (58). From the very beginning, the poem talks about how "that single scent/ sweetens the day-rectangles already baking,/ legions of bread" (lines 2-4), which got our club members reminiscing on memories of smelling baking bread. Just like in the poem, we reminisced about smelling bread in school and how it made us want to be closer to the cafeteria. The ending of the poem made us understand what the speaker was taking about when she mentioned: "it seemed so obvious./ I should have been a slab of butter" (lines 15&16). That made our mouths water. From that point we went off on a tangent of how smells seem to bring back the best memories. I ended up telling the story of meeting my mother-in-law for the first time, with a greeting of her sniffing me. I had asked my husband "what was that about?" He said, "She's trying to form a memory." What I thought was crazy then, became more reasonable after our conversation about this poem. It piqued my curiosity enough to start doing some research on how smells are able to evoke memories. My research gave me the name of many researchers, but one stood out the most: Dr. Rachel Herz from Brown University, who has been recognized as the world's leading expert on the psychology of smell, and who wrote a book on the subject called *The Scent of Desire*. Herz found that our fifth sense was taken for granted by us and academia, who thought smell wasn't an important topic for research for many years (preface xii). Herz changed that by researching this important sense in depth. Learning about the sense of smell made me greatly appreciate how and why we receive our scent-evoked memories, and all of that information helped me enjoy Nye's poem even more.

The sense of smell, known as olfaction, and emotion are as entwined as any two regions of the brain could be due to their location in the neural network structure called the limbic

system. Herz reports that the amygdala is the key limbic structure that interacts with our olfactory center and the brain's locus of emotion. If we did not have the amygdala, we would be unable to process our experiences, express our emotions, learn and remember emotional events (Herz). During brain imaging studies, the amygdala became activated when the participants perceived a scent: the more emotional their reaction, the more intense the activation became. This is the only sensory system that has such a direct connection to the part of the brain that controls our emotions. Herz has done experiments comparing memories triggered by a cue, such as popcorn, which was presented as a smell, sight, sound and feel. The smell and sound would come during the cooking process, while the sight and feel would be after the popcorn was cooked. Her experiments found that the only difference between the smell memory and other sensory forms was emotionality. Scents elicited past memories that were more emotional with greater intensity, and they brought the person back to that time or place. In our minds and in our brains scent-evoked memories are uniquely stimulating and emotional (Herz). When we reminisce on our scent-evoked memories, there will always be a rush of emotions and it will more than likely be about the same person or moment, but the sentiments may be different. The remoteness of the smell is another factor that allows odors to be faithful memory cues (Fields). This is the reason that scent association is not easily reversible. It acts similarly to a first impression—one that lasts in your mind. With this in mind, we see that scent-evoked memories are the “best” memory cues due to the distinctiveness of the odor and the emotionality that comes from them.

When it comes to taste, as in flavor, we mistake which sensory system actually provides that for us. We smell our food twice: through the nose, called orthonasal olfaction, then through the mouth, called retronasal olfaction (Fields). Because the last smell comes from the retronasal olfaction, located in the back of the mouth by the nasal cavity, we can see how we get the illusion

of taste being from the mouth. This is the brain's way of tricking us by interweaving smell and taste so seamlessly, giving us the flavors we enjoy (Herz). People who lose their sense of smell think they've actually lost their sense of taste. There are only four flavors that we can taste: sweet, sour, salty, and bitter (Feilds). What we find is that both retro and orthonasal olfaction rely on airflow, so when we have a cold or suffer from allergies food doesn't taste the same (Herz). Without airflow, smells can't get through, therefore making food taste like one of those four flavors previously mentioned. Wouldn't it be boring if we were unable to taste our food? So when we lose our sense of taste that's all we're missing out on, but when we lose our sense of smell, we miss out on the experience of food.

All the information from above made me curious as to what would happen if we were to lose our sense of smell. From Herz's research we find out that the loss of smell is known as anosmia. She reviewed studies that were done on patients who lost their sight and patients who lost their sense of smell during an accident; the people who were blinded felt more traumatized at first than the people who lost their sense of smell. The researchers had gone back to these same patients a year later and found that the blind had adjusted, and the anosmia patients were becoming depressed to the point of hospitalization or suicide. This depression comes from the olfactory neurons being unable to stimulate the amygdala (Herz). As we heard earlier, the amygdala is the "brain's focus of emotions," so without smells activating the amygdala, we can't get our rush of emotions.

As I had mentioned in the beginning, Nye's poem "Yeast," got my book dub wondering about smell-evoked memories. In "Yeast," the speaker is reminiscing on a time when she was in school and smelling a wonderful aroma coming from the school kitchen: "that single scent/ sweetens the day—rectangles already baking,/ legions of bread on long silver trays" (lines 3-4). The smells that would sometimes come from the school kitchen can make us reminisce on

school with fond memories. As my research has shown, when the rush of emotions comes to us, it may not give us an accurate memory, but it gives us an emotional memory. The speaker's thought of the bread is shown as if it was a class: "Like history, it won't stop happening./ Bread spreading its succulent flesh" (lines 5 & 6). It's as if she feels that memory about the smell of bread will live longer in her mind than what she actually learned in school. This is possible, considering what we learned about scent-evoked memories having the ability to last forever. The speaker tells us about one time when she was hit by a school map and she had to go to the health room, which only intensified the aroma: "Lying on the small cot,/ closing my eyes under the ice bag,/ I could smell the bread better from there" (lines 12-14). We get it: bread is an awesome smell that can help us escape into a world of our own. The speaker thinks the smell is so wonderful, "[She] should have been a slab of butter,/ the knife that cuts, the door/ to the oven" (lines 16-18). These sentiments show just how intense the sense of smell is to us.

We can see through the example of Nye's poem "Yeast," why Herz had to find an answer to the question, "Are smells the best cues to memory?" All of the research has shown that smells made for a distinctly emotional memory, therefore making them the best cues. The poem's speaker is reminiscing fondly on an aroma emanating from her school cafeteria; this reminds us of when a certain scent brings us back to a moment in time; it may not always be an accurate picture of what happened, but it's still worth getting that rush of emotions. I know that I will always yearn for the feeling I get when I smell a cigar, like my grandfather used to smoke, or the way my clothes smelled after my mother washed them; that smell even gets my kids reminiscing about their visits with her. This discussion about scent-evoked memories makes me realize that I've never asked my mother-in-law about what smells give her fond memories? The information I found most interesting is the research on anosmia, the loss of

smell. I will never take for granted my fifth sense again, and I would also like to suggest that neither should you.



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## Exemplary Essay 4: “A Stand Against the Standard”

English 101 Portfolio

Essay Cover Sheet

### **What was the assignment?**

Well, you did such a bang-up job on the policy development team that you have confused the mayor (or whatever level of official you actually dealt with in Paper 3)1 He now doesn't know what to believe. So, he's come back to you to ask you to develop your arguments on one side of your issue more fully and convince him that that side of the argument is correct. In other words, your job will be to persuade the Mayor to take a stand on the issue you presented in Paper 3. Note: you may, of course, switch to a public figure at the level appropriate to your topic. For this paper, I would like you to choose a side of a public, controversial issue and write a persuasive paper that convinces the audience, at least for a moment, that the argument you are making is the truth. Really think about why someone would believe the way the paper indicates and try to get that across to your audience. A well-written paper will be one that takes into account the opposition. Your audience for this paper is at very best neutral to your position; mostly likely, your audience is slightly hostile. 3.5-5 pages. Your paper must cite at least 4 credible, academic sources, at least one of which is new to this piece.

### **Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.**

I really like my whole paper. I think the most successful part of this paper are the two paragraphs of my personal experience. I feel that it makes the paper more relatable and that it shows why I feel the way I do about this subject and how much it means to me.

### **Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, and what changes did you make?**

I always start my writing process with some form of informal outline. For this paper my outline was a little more formal and traditional to help me stay on the topics points of my arguments. I had a total of 4 revisions with this paper. I had two class peer edits and two instructor edits. The main points in this paper stayed the same however many unnecessary portions were taken out and new ones were added. I took out a counter argument paragraph because it did not seem to fit well with the paper since there is counter argument intertwined with the paragraphs. I also have made a lot of grammar changes throughout this paper. I had an unusual amount of grammar errors in this paper initially. I am hopeful that throughout all of the revisions they have all been fixed.

## A Stand Against the Standard

You walk into a classroom with six very sharp, brand new number two pencils and a calculator in hand. You wish you had eaten a better breakfast, but you were nervous and feeling stressed out, so you passed. You find a seat, and before you know it, the instructor places a packet in front of you and a paper full of little tiny, oval bubbles labeled A,B,C,D. Your fate rests in those tiny ovals. If you score poorly, you may not graduate or get into college; however, if you score well, you may have your choice of many great colleges and have abundant scholarship opportunities. Standardized testing has been a fundamental part of our education system for many years. There are many standardized tests currently used in the United States public school system. The most well known of these tests are the SAT and the ACT which are most commonly used for college entrance and scholarship qualification purposes. Since the passing of The No Child Left Behind Reform Act in 2001, the mandatory use of standardized tests has drastically increased. The use of these tests has become one of the most controversial issues relating to our public education system. Standardized testing should be eliminated as it is a biased, ineffective form of measuring academic standing which has crippled the public education system.

The widespread and mandatory use of standardized tests has drastically decreased the diversity and overall quality of the curriculum used in public schools. Students deserve a diverse education that is useful in their lives beyond school. Because standardized test scores are published and teachers and schools are held accountable for those scores, an atmosphere has been created where teachers are required to teach primarily the subjects that are on the tests, leaving little room for other subjects. This stifles the ability for teachers to teach important subjects and life skills such as art, physical education, creative thinking, and reasoning skills. These tests promote a drill and memorize form of learning which provides

very little, if any, long term educational benefit to students. The article by ProCon “Standardized Tests” notes that “standardized tests measure only a small portion of what makes education meaningful” (“Standardized”). The article goes on to state qualities that standardized tests cannot measure include creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, curiosity, endurance, reliability, enthusiasm, empathy, self-awareness, self-discipline, leadership, civic-mindedness, courage, compassion, resourcefulness, sense of beauty, sense of wonder, honesty and integrity. (“Standardized”)

These are all extremely important skills and virtues for both the work place and life in general. The fact that these important skills are being neglected as a result of standardized tests is unacceptable. The use of these tests has also limited what is taught in each subject. For example, in the web article “Education” written by Rich Motoko for *The New York Times*, a seventh grade teacher who’s school district dictated a writing program that targeted expository and persuasive essays because that was what was tested, stated “I have some very gifted writers who are being shoved into a very narrow kind of writing” (Motoko). Suppressing a student's gifts and strengths for the purpose of scoring well on standardized tests is unforgivable. As a result, this student's gifts may never be realized or shaped which is an injustice to the student and to society. Had this been happening in our public education system in the past we may never have had many of the famous and influential writers which we hold so dear today.

Standardized tests cause an extremely stressful environment for both teachers and students which is both unhealthy and non conducive to a meaningful and useful education. Since student’s test scores are used to evaluate teachers, there is an enormous amount of pressure on teachers to have their students score well. With the risk of losing their jobs dangling in front of them, some otherwise good teachers have chosen under great stress to cross educationally ethical boundaries and cheat. In 2011 there was a high profile standardized testing cheating scandal in

Atlanta. The web article by CNN Justice, “Former Atlanta Schools Superintendent Reports to Jail in Cheating Scandal” states that “for at least four years, between 2005 and 2009, test answers were altered, fabricated, and falsely certified...about 180 teachers were implicated initially” (“Former”). The article explains that it was learned during the investigation that “educators cheated...to keep their jobs ...” (Former). Likely some of these teachers were good teachers who never would have crossed those ethical boundaries had it not been for the extreme pressures to increase test scores. Though this does not represent all teachers, the pressure to have students score well has created a fear in some teachers and school districts that is so great it has altered their ethical morals. The CNN article summarizes the scandal appropriately by stating ‘tragically, the Atlanta cheating scandal harmed our children and it crystallizes the Unintended consequences of our test-crazed policies’ (“Former”). Cheating on standardized tests as a result of the pressures, they create has created a very unhealthy environment for our youth that robs students of a fair education.

The stress these tests cause our children is not too dissimilar. By administering these tests with such high stakes, such as whether a student will get into college, whether they will receive scholarships, or if they will even be able to receive a diploma, we have passed an immense amount of stress on to our children. Children are not capable of processing and dealing with that type of stress. At 18 years old, few of us are emotionally developed enough to process the pressure of resting one’s entire future on a few single tests. Though it is not a certainty that if you do poorly on a standardized test such as the SAT that you will fail in life, the school system teaches our youth that this is the case. These pressures are so enormous that some students have become so stressed out about taking these tests that there has been a significant occurrence of students vomiting during the test. The article “Standardized Testing” cites a Sacramento Bee report that states “test related jitters, especially among young students,

are so common that the Stafford-9 exam comes with instructions on what to do with a test booklet in case a student vomits on it” (“Standardized”). The article goes on to cite education researcher Gregory J. Cizek who states that standardized testing “produces gripping anxiety in even the brightest students, and makes young children vomit or cry, or both” (“Standardized”). Placing this amount of stress on our children is unhealthy, harmful, and not beneficial to the education process.

The biggest reason that standardized testing is an ineffective form of testing is that it is extremely biased towards youth with disabilities and those of lower economic standing. The standardized tests are biased from the moment they are created as they are created by people and people by nature are biased. Despite the rigorous panel of educators that the questions go through to weed out bias, some will inevitably seep through. Students with both learning and physical disabilities during normal class activities and tests are allowed to use special devices, tools, and references necessary for them to be able to complete the work and the the material, but these accommodations are rarely allowed during standardized tests. This is an unfair practice that inhibits the success of the students who need these accommodations. A clear example that standardized tests are also biased towards students of different races and of lower economic standing is that their scores directly reflect a students economic status in society. Typically upper class students score well on these tests while lower class and non white students score poorly. In the web article “Standardized Testing: Measuring What Matters Least,” Jonathan Pollard exemplifies this by relating that “research has indicated that the amount of poverty found in a community, and other factors that have absolutely nothing to do with what happens in the classroom, account for the greatest majority of differences in test scores from one area to another” (Pollard). This happens because, as the web article “Standardized Testing” points out, “Standardized tests are unfair and discriminatory, because

students with diverse backgrounds and skill levels are expected to answer questions written for the white, abled majority” (“Standardized”). If there were no bias in these tests relating to race or economic status, then the test scores would not be reflective of these things. We live in a country with many disabled students, students with diverse economic ranges, and large numbers of students with varied ethnic backgrounds. It is an insult to our educational system to require tests that are swayed not to support these diversities.

This is an issue that has both effected me personally and will affect my daughter in the future. When I was in high school, I was a good student. I graduated with a 3.7 grade point average. I took the ACT test and scored terribly. I was told by my counselor that I should not even bother apply to the college I wanted to attend, which was the University of Washington. I was told that with my ACT scores, I would never get in, and if I did I would not be able to afford to attend since I would not qualify for any scholarships. One standardized test changed my life. I was given the option to apply and attend North Idaho College, but in true teenage fashion, I wanted a “real college” or none at all. I decided not to attend college based on the options that I was informed I had. It took me almost thirteen years to realize that one test should not be in control of my future and to enroll in college. I know that had I not needed to take a standardized test, and if my academic standing had been based on my grade point average, work ethic, and true understanding of the curriculum, I would have been able to attend a college such as the University of Washington and that I would have done well.

The use of standardized tests will affect many students in a potentially negative way. Their use will likely affect my daughter. My daughter is nine years old and in the second grade; she was held back a year in kindergarten. She was diagnosed with Dyslexia about two years ago. During normal school work she is allowed to use visual references so that she can visually and mentally understand the material. When she is older, she will likely need an audio device

along with visual references. With the current tests, this will not be allowed. My daughter is very bright. She was just chosen to take a standardized test to evaluate if she is gifted. It is absurd that I have a daughter that may test in the gifted range but may not graduate high school because she may not be able to understand the required test. This is an unacceptable flaw in the system, and it breaks my heart that she will have to feel like she is less than she is because of a biased test. Educating our children is collectively the most important thing we do in this country. It is the basis for the future of this country. We have always prided ourselves as having an exceptional education system. We need to reform our public education system by eliminating standardized testing so that all children receive a fair, healthy, comprehensive, and diverse education that will suit them for a productive fulfilling life after school.



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## Sample Essays—Good (received a Pass rating)

## Good Essay 1: "Should College Athletes Be Paid?"

### Should College Athletes Be Paid?

"John" is a starter on the Gonzaga men's basketball team; he struggles with homework due to the fact that the only time he has time to do it is late at night after practicing and working out. "John" also struggles with his diet because he can't afford enough food and nutrients to keep his body in top shape to perform to the best of his ability on the court and doesn't have any time for a job while juggling school and athletics. NCAA student-athletes receive benefits such as room and board, injury insurance, and many receive scholarships of some sort. However, college athletes also have a lot of pressure on them from their peers to do well in what they do. Although many receive these benefits, they still deserve to be paid.

The NCAA forbids their athletes from being paid and have many rules backing that as said in "Summary of NCAA Regulations-NCAA Division I" by the NCAA. "You are not eligible for participation in a sport if you have ever: Taken pay, or the promise of pay, for competing in that sport." The NCAA and schools do not want to pay these athletes because they want them to keep their amateur status. There have been countless arguments from both sides for decades and it honestly feels never ending. This issue has been scheduled to be addressed at an NCAA board meeting, this meeting will be in August with approximately 50 school presidents along with the NCAA President Mark Emmert to discuss the future of Division I athletics. The NCAA needs to make some changes and hopefully they can figure it out at this conference.

One may say the scholarships these athletes receive is plenty but are they really? Yes, some do get a free ride to the top universities around the country, however that free ride doesn't make up for the countless hours that many athletes put into their specific athletic team. Many student-athletes spend much more time working out, practicing, attending team meetings, etc, than they do in class or studying. According to the article "Do College Athletes Have Time to be

Students” by Lynn O’Shaughnessy, “Division I baseball players devote 42.1 hours a week to the sport during their season, which is 10.4 hours more than they spend on academics.” Now that’s a statistic that shouldn’t be overlooked; are these young adults trying to graduate college or are they trying to bring their team to victory?

These universities make millions upon millions off of these athletes. “In 2010, television networks paid the NCAA \$10.8 billion for the March Madness broadcasting rights for the next 14 years” (Fram and Frampton). Big time college athletes create major exposure for their respected universities, resulting in merchandise sales and even new enrollments. All of these add up to major bucks and the athletes don’t see a dime of the money. A student on a scholarship can work on campus in the bookstore and be paid so a student-athlete that most likely puts in more hours than the bookstore worker deserves to be paid as well.

As mentioned in “At-a-glance” by Ronald Fornaro, “According to a study by the National College Players Association and Drexel University, the average all-expenses- paid scholarship doesn’t pay all expenses, after all...the average college football or men’s basketball player owes more than \$3,000— \$3,222 to be exact—from his own pocket, per year.” So it’s not like these athletes are going to school completely free, they still have to pay. There should be restrictions to who gets paid and who does not, for example maybe they have to keep a C grade average and stay out of trouble. If they follow the rules throughout the whole year then yes, pay the people.

Someone that would disagree with the athletes being paid would argue that the \$25,000 or so scholarship is plenty and sets them up for life with the education they get. Many would respond to that with to that with \$25,000 isn’t even close to the millions that the NCAA and schools make off them and, as stated above, it’s proven that college athletes spend more time on the field than in class. They also might argue that the free room and board gives them even less to

worry about. Even if they have a room to sleep in and a room that they can always come back to they deserve a little more than a dorm room bed to show appreciation for the long practices and working out they endure.

Hours and hours of work in athletics, not much time for real school, millions of dollars schools make off of these athletes while receiving no pay, things like this need to be reconsidered. The NCAA and schools have many obstacles to overcome and a lot of topics to deal with but hopefully in the near future they can resolve these matters and give these student-athletes what they deserve. If anything student-athletes deserve at least an allowance at the minimum.

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Good Essay 2: "Male Genital Cutting in the U. S."

### Male Genital Cutting in the U.S.

The practice of Male Genital Cutting (MGC), or circumcision, is generally considered a taboo conversation subject in U.S. society, although it is a common and accepted practice. Despite the taboo, I spoke to many people around me in preparing for this paper including friends, relatives and classmates, so as to get a better understanding of where the 'average American' is in terms of opinion and education on the subject.

Overall I was amazed at how many people whole-heartedly endorse male circumcision without knowing much at all about the actual procedure, or the risks and benefits thereof. A society or individual shouldn't endorse or condemn this practice without first being educated about the medical and ethical aspects of it. I feel that MGC is comparable to the widely condemned practice of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and should be likewise outlawed as a Human Rights violation.

MGC is a simple procedure that raises complicated moral issues with medical, religious and social aspects, but there are two basic and equally extreme sides in the debate on MGC; one side says it's a safe and medically sound procedure, while the other side claims it to be "a barbaric violation of human rights" (Hodges, Warner). People in the United States have a vested interest in this issue because there are millions of boys and men affected by this procedure and "it is estimated that about ten thousand girls are at risk of [genital cutting]" (Sarkis) as well. MGC "is one of the most common procedures in the world." (AAP) and "consists of the surgical removal of some, or all, of the foreskin (or prepuce) from the penis." (AAP)

Genital cutting has a long a varied history in many cultures and therefore religions and is common among Jews, Christians and Muslims the world over; however non- religious MGC is

common in the U.S. “Non-religious circumcision was introduced into this country on a very small scale in the 1860s for a single purpose: to stop masturbation. Circumcision was used as a deliberate surgical intervention to debilitate and desensitize the penis.” (Hodges, Warner)

“During the Victorian era, physicians began to believe that all sexual activity was dangerous to physical and emotional health. Masturbation was viewed as the most dangerous form of sexuality and was named as the cause of every known disease, from blindness to nervousness, insanity, venereal disease, tuberculosis, and death. With every credible American doctor and medical association issuing dire warnings about masturbation, any step taken towards its eradication and prevention was deemed justified.” (Hodges, Warner) It became ingrained in the American psyche that the penis is inherently dangerous and dirty when not circumcised, so even after these views have been popularly debunked, the myths about and practice of MGC continues.

Because there is ongoing debate as to the risks and benefits of this practice, “numerous recent studies have attempted to assess the value of neonatal circumcision. Several have determined that the procedure has positive effects.” (Laumann, Masi, Zuckerman) “Specific benefits from male circumcision were identified for the prevention of urinary tract infections, acquisition of HIV, transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, and penile cancer.” (AAP) While most American medical professionals will say that MGC “does not appear to adversely affect penile sexual function/sensitivity or sexual satisfaction,” (AAP) others argue “the foreskin is one of the most erotically sensitive parts of the penis” and “plays a large role in sexual function.” (Hodges, Warner)

Genital cutting is genital cutting regardless of a subject’s gender, so to understand the moral objections to MGC, one must understand FGC as well and examine the medical and moral similarities and differences between them. “FGC ...is a term used to refer to any practice which



includes the removal or alteration of the female genitalia.” (Sarkis) There are three main types of FGC that range in severity, but even the mildest form “involves the removal of the prepuce with or without the excision of part or all of the clitoris.” (qtd. in Sarkis) “Long-term complications include sexual frigidity, genital malformation, delayed menarche, chronic pelvic complications, recurrent urinary tract infection, and an entire range of obstetric complications ...” (Sarkis) This is clearly a dangerous practice and “The United Nations, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization consider FGC to be a violation of Human rights and have made recommendations to eradicate this practice.” (Sarkis) However it continues because it is an important part of many peoples’ culture and religion; “family honor, cleanliness, protections against spells, insurance of virginity and faithfulness to the husband” (Sarkis) are all used as justifications for FGC.

Clearly, MGC is far less physically dangerous than FGC, but the emotional toll is harder to determine. “In the United States, the procedure [ MGC] is commonly performed during the newborn period” (AAP) and this is where the real debate is centered; should this practice, no matter how beneficial, be performed on infants? All human beings deserve the right to refuse the removal of a part of their body, even infants, that's why female genital cutting is so frowned on. The U.N., UNESCO, and WHO all agree that little girls the world over should have the right to refuse to have their genitalia removed and mutilated; it is sexist and unfair not to extend that same protection to little boys. While it is true that FGC is far more extreme and detrimental to overall health and well being, and there are medical benefits ascribed to MGC, there is mounting evidence that MGC does more emotional harm than medical good, and a growing movement to end this antiquated ritual.

Human beings are a product of millions of years of evolutionary processes that favor fitness and adaptation. This means that each and every morphological trait present in modern

humans served to make our ancestors more capable of survival and reproduction. Obviously, sex organs are an integral part of reproduction, which is the driving force behind biological functions, so it would only make sense that the foreskin evolved for a reason and serves a purpose. It acts as a sort of protective covering for the mucus membrane that is the head of a penis, “much like the eyelid ...it keeps everything moist, clean, and lubricated.” (Hodges, Warner) My father, Robert Olney, was one of the people I spoke to about this issue; he is 56 years old and “still feels violated” because part of his genitalia was removed without his consent and he's not the only one. “Today, American men in increasing numbers are becoming aware that they had a right to all of their reproductive organs and that no one had the right to remove part of their body. Men are now demanding the right to control their own sexual organs.” (Hodges, Warner)

Some will insist that many men have lead normal, productive lives after experiencing neonatal MGC and that it typically doesn't traumatize them. It doesn't really matter; this issue isn't ultimately about psychology or medicine or religion, this is about Human Rights. It's illegal to tattoo a baby, or brand it, or bind its feet, or perform any number of other 'beautification rituals' and circumcision should be considered just that. If a person wants to hack off their genitalia or poke holes in their face with a needle or have plastic surgery then fine, let them make those choices as an informed and experienced adult, but it isn't something that should be forced on anyone, especially children. The U.N. declared Universal Human Rights to include “security of person regardless of age, gender, religion, or any other consideration” and this should clearly include the surgical alteration of infant genitalia.

In summation, there are clear analogies between male and female genital cutting in that: they are the result of religious and cultural practices, and should be considered in violation of

basic Human Rights when performed on children. American parents need to do more research and fully understand these processes so that neonatal circumcision can be abolished. However, people deserve freedom of religion so these practices should be legal for adults and performed in sanitary and professional settings to minimize the risks involved.

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Good Essay 3: “Smart Meters, Smart Technology:

English 101Portfolio Essay Cover Sheet

Instructor Prefix: 14

On: “Smart Meters, Smart Technology”

**What was the assignment?**

It is your job in this next paper to choose a topic of interest on which you will conduct formal research, gather sources, collect data, examples, evidence, which will in turn allow you to take a specific stance on an issue. Pick an issue that you've wanted to learn more about, but which you know has several angles and differing perspectives that demand careful consideration. You will write a 4-5 page paper that takes on a specific PURPOSE: What do you want your audience to do? To think about something? To act? To change their minds? To consider alternative views? To accept your position as plausible? To see that you have thought carefully about an issue and researched it appropriately? You will need to have at least 4 sources for this paper, two of which must be from academic, scholarly sources (peer-reviewed journals, articles, texts, academic mediums).

**Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.**

I feel that my push towards reducing carbon-dioxide emissions is the most successful part of this paper. I approached it from a number of different angles and did my best to point out that without smart meters it would be much more, difficult if not impossible, to make a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions without the new smart meters in place. I also feel that I used my sources to very good affect in this paper.

**Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, and what changes did you make?**

My writing process mainly consisted of research, upon research, upon more research. There is so much information out there about smart meters that it was quite difficult to pin-point exactly the key points that I wanted to talk about. I wrote an outline that I ended up mostly scrapping because there were too many points and my paper would have ended up 12-15 pages if I was to talk about everything I wanted to talk about in my outline.

14 -

English 101 Argumentative

Essay

### Smart Meters, Smart Technology

The world's largest interconnected machine, the United States electrical grid, is in desperate need of being upgraded. Currently, we are running our entire electric system on century old technology and as Energy Secretary Steven Chu told a power industry conference, “America cannot build a 21st century energy economy with a mid-20th century electricity system”. These smart-meters are a major and necessary step because they will allow us to analyze, adapt, maintain and monitor electricity usage within every aspect of the U.S. electrical grid. The problems in our electrical grid are buried so deep that we need a mole that can dig deep enough to see where the problems truly lie. We are no longer just dependent on electricity, it has become the foundation of our nation. Advances have to be made and we are better off embracing them as an evolution in technology than worrying about the possible negative side effects and bugs in the system that our government and the utility companies are working very hard to ensure won't be an issue. Other technologies such as hybrid gas-electric cars and wind and solar electric generators will benefit from the usage of smart-meters.

At first glance, these new smart-meters that the electric companies are installing are frightening. They monitor everything that uses electricity in your home. The power companies can tell when you're home, when you're gone and when you're on vacation and all this information bounces wirelessly from meter-to-meter all the way back to the power companies. It's pretty scary to think that someone might be able to access all that information en route to the power company or even from the database that it's all stored on. Besides all that, over 40 million

smart-meters have already been deployed and William Atkinson states in Smart Meters, Smart Decisions, “by the end of the decade smart meters may be deployed to almost all U.S. households.” Since we had no choice in this why don't we look at the good side and see why they are forcing them on us.

Current methods of producing electricity are wasteful, unsustainable and very damaging to our atmosphere. Jennifer Weeks states in Modernizing the Grid that more than forty percent of U.S. energy-related emissions of carbon-dioxide, the main greenhouse gas that drives global climate change, comes from generating electricity from fossil fuels. (Weeks 152,153) Everyone has finally noticed that global warming is happening and that we need to do everything we can to limit our influence on it. One of the biggest and most obvious changes we need to make lies within our reliance on fossil fuels. Wind and solar energy is completely sustainable, clean and a good step in the right direction, however, it is too intermittent to be relied upon for a large percentage of our power usage with our century old electricity grid. These smart meters are a necessary tool in upgrading each aspect of our electrical grid so that wind and solar energy can be utilized to greater effect.

The data collected from these smart meters will show the utility companies, in depth, exactly where the biggest faults lie in the system. Armed with this knowledge they will be able to improve every aspect of the system, including electricity storage and long distance transmission, as well as localized distribution. Hybrid cars affect both sides of the situation. If they become too widespread too fast, our current power grid will not be able to support them even though we have the capabilities of generating the electricity. Consumers also have to be charged for the electricity to charge them when they are not charging them at home and these smart meters will be able to identify when someone plugs their car in so that they could bill that person for the

electricity.

On the other side, once there are enough of them on the roads, they will be used as batteries, redistributing their stored energy back into the grid when they are not in use. Former Vice President Al Gore wrote in The New York Times, “cars could be charged during off-peak energy-use hours; during peak hours, when fewer cars are on the road, they could contribute their electricity back into the national grid.” (Gore) To help offset the intermittency of wind and solar power, these smart meters will allow cars to be plugged back in during the day and used to supply energy back into the grid close to the point of energy usage. With enough electric cars on the road this would promote stability in the grid by providing electricity storage as well as more localized distribution.

As an additional major bonus, more electric cars on the road being driven means less gas is being burned and fewer carbon dioxide emissions would be released into the atmosphere. There are already over 800 million-cars on the road and they expect that number to go up to 1.1 billion by 2020. We need to find an alternate fuel source. According to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory we could supply electricity to 73% of our light vehicles with the power plants the U.S. already has and decrease oil use by 6.2 million barrels a day or 52% of current imports. (Smith) To add to that, a study by the Electric Power Research Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council says that if we replaced 60% of the cars on the road with electric cars, it would only-raise electricity consumption by 8% yet it would cut 450 million metric tons of U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions annually. That would be the same as taking 82 million cars off U.S. roads.

This all builds up to the beauty and difficulties of solar energy in this whole equation. As mentioned before, solar energy is green and sustainable. With smart meters and the new hybrid



cars allowing solar energy to be stored and utilized to greater effect the solar industry is growing. Rhone Resch, chief executive of the Solar Energy Industries Association, says that the solar industry, which utility companies have not liked in the past, has risen to employ over 100 thousand people; more than double the number of employees in 2009. (Merritt) He also expects that number to increase to over 250 thousand over the next five years. Smart meters are lessening utility companies' dislike of solar energy because they allow it to be more usable to the utility companies, thus providing more jobs and the potential for even more growth in the future.

Despite the need to upgrade the whole grid, there are other benefits as well. Contrary to peoples' fear of smart meters putting people out of work; solar energy is not the only place smart meters are creating more jobs than they are taking away. A global energy consulting firm, KEMA, estimated that even after lost utility positions, such as meter readers, smart grid investments will have generated 280 thousand more jobs by today. This includes equipment suppliers, contractors and energy service companies. (Weeks 160) Imagine how many more will be created as they expand the smart grid throughout the rest of the nation. New non-profit independent system operations command centers will be opening up everywhere to manage and monitor each regions electrical grid, just like they have in New England where they recently invested \$4 billion to expand and modernize their transmission system. None of which would be any kind of effective if not for smart meters.

All-in-all, we have desperately needed some major changes in the way we produce, manage and distribute our electricity. We are completely destroying our atmosphere and wasting massive amounts of fuel and electricity to make sure we destroy it faster. Technology is

advancing at such a fast rate that the rest of the 'technological economy', so-to-speak, has failed to keep pace. Now is the time for action. Our children and grandchildren are relying on us to set a good foundation for moving into the future with the rapid development of technological advancements that will undoubtedly continue to astound us all. Smart meters are a major part of this foundation that we are laying for future generations. If knowledge is power than smart meters are leaving behind a very powerful legacy of knowledge for which many generations to come will surely thank us for.

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Sample Essay—Problematic (received a  
Not Passing rating)

Problematic Essay: “Independent Energy in America”

Please type or print.

**What was the writing assignment? (Use your teacher's words or attach the assignment.)**

You will be writing two research papers, one each on differing sides of the same issue. Choose a topic with clearly delineated stances. This might be as straightforward as a simple pro/con debate, but remember most issues are not totally black and white. Take, for example, the legalization of marijuana. Some believe that it should simply be made legal, like alcohol. Others believe marijuana should simply remain an illegal drug. There are others, though, who believe that marijuana should remain illegal as a recreational drug but that it should be made legally available for certain medical purposes. Further arguments exist within even this last stance: for which medical conditions should marijuana be legal? How and by whom should the drug be controlled?

One of the goals of your research should be to narrow your topic down to the most manageable breadth possible for this assignment.

You will submit ONE of these papers with your final portfolio. Your reader should not be able to tell whether your paper coincides with your views or not.

MLA Format

1000 word minimum

2-5 cited academic sources

**Please describe what you consider most successful in this paper.**

I believe that I got my point across about how and why hydraulic fracturing, solar, and wind power could help to make more self-reliant America.

**Please describe your writing process. For example, what editorial help did you have, from whom, what changes did you make?**

I found all my research on the internet, and with help from peer editing I finalized my paper.

1

## Independent Energy in America

Ever since the Arab oil embargoes that had occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, our presidents have pledged to one day end our dependence on foreign oil. The oil embargoes had made them realize that Energy independence is not just a convenience, but also a matter of national security. Some of the main issues with this dream to make America self-reliant was the fact the resources that were available to us caused too much pollution and are unsustainable. Now with the help of hydraulic fracturing, wind, and solar power America may be getting closer to its goal of being completely energy independent than it has ever been before.

Our energy independence is becoming a reality thanks largely to hydraulic fracturing. This is a process that requires a hole to be dug then shot full of pressurized fluids to fracture underground rock layers and release petroleum, natural gas, and coal seam gas. Ever since it was “first used in the 1940s hydraulic fracturing has unlocked massive new supplies of oil and clean-burning natural gas” (Energy Tomorrow). Although very effective, the pros of hydraulic fracturing did not come without its critics because of all the potential risk to the environment, just like almost everything else that is done by Americans these days. The truth is “fracturing technology has a strong environmental track record and is employed under close supervision by state, local, and federal regulators” (Energy Tomorrow). In fact “studies by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC) have confirmed no

direct link between hydraulic fracturing operations and groundwater contamination” (Energy Tomorrow). Not only does this “proven and well-regulated technology” give us more independents, but it is also providing Americans with high paying jobs as well as helping to boost our economy.

Wind power is another great example of an extremely clean source of energy. It is a completely renewable source of power with none of the drawbacks of fossil fuels. “Wind turbines don’t produce atmospheric emissions that cause acid rain or greenhouse gasses” (U.S. Department of Energy) and it cannot be used up, which makes it a great source of alternative energy. Wind power only has a couple of real downsides to it, like the cost of the initial investment; which is “much higher than fossil-fueled generators,” and “how energetic a wind site is, the wind farm may or may not be cost competitive” (U. S. Department of Energy). Still even with these slight drawbacks “wind energy is the lowest-priced renewable energy technologies available today” (U. S. Department of Energy). Wind power is domestic, renewable, and abundant which makes it a perfect resource for a country that is trying to escape its dependents on importing energy sources from other countries.

Another clean, domestic, and renewable energy source is from solar power. Solar power creates absolutely no pollution making it the cleanest power source that we have available for use today. The only disadvantages to using solar energy is; besides how expensive the initial setup is, the fact that solar power cannot be harnessed if the sun is not shining and “this limits how much power can be saved for future days” (Alternate Power.org). In the long run this seems like a very small inconvenience for something that has so many advantages; the advantages well outweigh

the inconveniences. For instance, after the initial setup cost, solar power is practically a free source of energy. Not to mention it has very little maintenance and operates without making any noise at all. With all these advantages and the fact that “solar power technology is improving consistently over time” makes solar energy something that should definitely be looked into. It is a resource that we cannot afford to ignore because it’s through the combination of hydraulic fracturing, wind, and solar power that may one day make it possible for us to achieve its energy independence.

Americans have a long road ahead of us in making these things reality, but it is definitely a road that is worth traveling. We need to realize that the little things like the initial cost of the setup is really a small price to pay if you look at the bigger picture. Hydraulic fracturing, solar, and wind power are things that; while they still may not be perfect, they offer at least some sort of stability in finalizing our energy independence. If we would only be willing to invest a little into helping to further the development of these technologies, we would be able to one day reap the benefits of having a self- sustainable country in the future. The good news is that everywhere you look you are already starting to see the change that Americans are making all around the country. Every time you see a hybrid car driving down the street or see a huge portion of land covered by wind mills, what we are really looking at is the change that our society is making for a cleaner and more efficient future. Oil at one time was seen as a good thing, but all good things must come to an end. It is time for us to broaden our horizons and start looking into cleaner and more permanent ways of sustain this country energy supply.



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U.S Department of Energy. March 2013. 4 March 2013 <<http://www.eere.energy.gov/wind/m/windad.html>>.

# Portfolio Protocol

## Midterm Portfolio Process

This round of portfolios consists of a single essay.

PRESENTATION: (from bottom to top)

- Each student presents a clean copy of the essay (no instructor remarks and no grade).
- On top of the essay, you'll put a cover sheet describing the assignment, the strengths of the essay, and the writing process.
- On top of the cover sheet, you'll put a green rating slip.

IDENTIFICATION:

- Please put a title atop the first page of your essay.
- Put your instructor's prefix + your SID numbers on each page as a running header.
- Pencil in your first name on the back side of the last page of your essay. This extra step makes it easier for your instructor to hand back the essays after the portfolio assessment.
- Make sure to put your instructor's prefix and your SID on the rating slip, and on the cover sheet.

## Final Portfolio Process

### Details for Students

1. Any student who PASSEd at midterm should include that essay and the rating sheet in the portfolio. (The reader of the portfolio then looks at only two documents, saving time and energy.)
2. An essay that received a Low Pass rating at midterm must be included with the revision attached and stapled on top. Please leave the green rating sheet with the first reader's comments attached to the midterm essay.
3. All essays should be submitted in an 8 ½" x 11" manila file folder (NOT a legal-sized folder) with no decorations; that folder should have the instructor's prefix and the student's complete SID # on the tab.
4. Clean copies--without instructor or peer comments--of both essays and the reflective cover letter should be submitted in that manila folder.
5. On all essays, the instructor's prefix and the student's complete SID should be the only identifying heading. Students should lightly pencil in their first names on the back side of the last pages. The instructor's name appears nowhere on students' work.
6. Each essay—including the cover sheet with the assignment—should be stapled in the upper left corner.
7. Students should fill out the final rating sheet with the instructor prefix and their own student ID numbers and put it inside the folder. The rating sheet should not be stapled to any paper for the final portfolio.

Faculty Rating Sheet for Midterm Essay and Final Portfolio

English 101 Assessment

Faculty Rating Sheet

Instructor prefix + full SID

\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Reader's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

MID-TERM ESSAY

Passing \_\_\_\_\_

Low Passing \_\_\_\_\_

Not Passing \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria

\_\_\_\_ focus / main point / thesis

\_\_\_\_ organization / structure / paragraphing

\_\_\_\_ development of ideas or experiences

\_\_\_\_ wording or sentence syntax

\_\_\_\_ audience awareness

\_\_\_\_ response to the assignment

\_\_\_\_ attribution of sources

\_\_\_\_ punctuation

\_\_\_\_ spelling / proofreading

\_\_\_\_ other:

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments

English 101 Assessment

Faculty Rating Sheet

Instructor prefix + full SID

\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Reader's Initials \_\_\_\_\_

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Passing \_\_\_\_\_

Not Passing \_\_\_\_\_

Not Passing (one essay) \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria

\_\_\_\_ focus / main point / thesis

\_\_\_\_ organization / structure / paragraphing

\_\_\_\_ development of ideas or experiences

\_\_\_\_ wording or sentence syntax

\_\_\_\_ audience awareness

\_\_\_\_ response to the assignment

\_\_\_\_ attribution of sources

\_\_\_\_ punctuation

\_\_\_\_ spelling / proofreading

\_\_\_\_ other:

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments

## Garrison Description of Writing Quality

### Pass (C or higher) for mid-term and final

- thesis is clear and controls paper yet lacks specificity, unification; the essay's digressions do not profoundly distract the reader
- evidence and analysis is adequate but thin, and some development is overly general or repetitive
- organization is occasionally not clear, compelling the reader to stop and re-read previous material to be sure of meaning
- while some sentence variety is attempted, diction is sometimes wordy or clichéd
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors do not profoundly interfere with meaning

### Low pass at midterm/No pass at final (C-)

- while a thesis may be present, it does not control the paper; it might be awkwardly worded or vague; the focus may digress in a manner distracting to the reader
- supporting information is inadequate; development lacks concrete detail or the detail is too general, inappropriate, or repetitive
- organization is often unclear or meandering; the flow of ideas within the paragraphs and transitions between the paragraphs lack coherence, compelling the reader to stop and re-read to be sure of meaning.
- diction is characterized by wordiness or clichés
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors interfere with meaning at times

### Not passing (D or lower) for mid-term and final

- lack of focus--due to the writer's haste, carelessness, lack of attention, or lack of ability--severely distracts the reader, and the controlling idea is absent
- inadequate development is characterized by details that are scanty, general, inappropriate, repetitive, and vague
- lack of organization compels the reader to struggle to find the sense, and the sense may never be found; the writer has infrequent control of the material.
- diction is characterized by wordiness, clichés, and grammar tangles that distract and interfere with meaning
- grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors severely interfere with meaning and add to a sloppy visual presentation