WRITING ACROSS CARROLL

Why Should I Trust Student Advice? How to Get the Most Out of Peer Review

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 26 12:30 PM DOLAN 202/203

IMPROVING STUDENT
PEER FEEDBACK

Linda B. Nilson

Abstract. Instructors use peer feedback to afford students multiple assessments of their work and to help them acquire important lifelong skills. However, research finds that this type of feedback has questionable validity, reliability, and accuracy, and instructors consider much of it too uncritical, superficial, vague, and content-focused, among other things. This article posits that the typical judgment-based feedback questions give students emotionally charged tasks that they are cognitively ill equipped to perform well and that permit laxness. It then introduces an alternative that encourages neutral, informative, and thorough responses that add genuine value to the peer feedback process.

C ollege-level faculty are relinquishing control of their students' in-class activities and assignments as never before, increasingly holding students responsible for not only their own learning but that of their peers as well. The popularity of cooperative learning reflects this sweeping trend, and we commonly find it coupled with other student-centered methods, such as problem-based learning, the case method, service learning, and creative multimedia assign-ments. In a parallel development, faculty are mandating students to evaluate and critique one another's work, not just the drafts and rehearsals but also the final versions and performances. Disciplines from English to engineering are trying out this quasi "studio model" of teaching and learning, once confined mostly to architecture and the arts.

The reasons for this trend are both practical and pedagogical. Widespread cuts in university budgets along with increasing enrollments have prompted faculty and faculty developers to devise and use more time-efficient teaching and assessment methods, especially in writ-ing-intensive courses (Boud, Cohen, and Sampson 1999). At the same time, research studies have found peer learning and assessment to be quite effective methods for developing critical thinking, communication, lifelong learning, and collaborative skills (Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans 1999; Topping 1998; Candy, Crebert, and O'Leary 1994; Williams 1992; Bangert-Drowns et al. 1991; Slavin 1990; Crooks 1988).

Yet peer feedback is not without its problems. Many instructors experience difficulties in implementing the method (McDowell 1995), and the quality of student peer feedback is uneven. Although Topping (1998) provides evidence from thirty-one studies that peer feedback is usually valid and reliable, Dancer and Dancer (1992) and Pond, Ulhaq, and Wade (1995) maintain to the contrary that research shows that peer assessments are biased by friendship and race. Reliability is especially poor when students evaluate each other's essays (Mowl and Pain 1995) and oral presentations (Taylor 1995; Watson 1989)—perhaps the most common contexts for peer feedback. Another problem is accuracy, defined as agreement with the instructor's comments and grading. Some studies report high accuracy (Oldfield and Macalpine 1995; Rushton, Ramsey, and Rada 1993; Fry 1990), but others find that most students grade more leniently than the instructor over 80 percent of the time (Orsmond, Merry, and Reitch 1996;

Linda B. Nilson is the director of the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation at Clemson University, in South Carolina.

Pond, Ulhaq, and Wade 1995; Stefani 1992). Despite the pitfalls, Topping (1998) contends that what is lost in quality is compensated for by greater volume, frequency, and immediacy of peer feedback, compared to the instructor's, and that therefore peer feedback is well worth using—and improving.

The mixed research findings mirror the reality that some faculty are pleased with the quality of student peer feedback and others are not. The approach to soliciting feedback that I propose here should be especially useful to those who are not pleased with the assessments their students make about one another's work.

The Problem: The Students

In both the literature and the workshops I have facilitated on this topic, faculty have identified many and surprisingly varied weaknesses in the student peer feedback they have seen:

- uncritical in general
- superficial and unengaged in general
- focused on a student's likes and dislikes of the work rather than its quality
- focused on trivial problems and errors (e.g., spelling)
- focused on content alone, missing organization, structure, style, and so forth
- focused on their agreement or disagreement with the argument made rather than the logic of and evidence for the argument
- unnecessarily harsh, even mean-spirited; unconstructive in its criticisms
- inconsistent, internally contradictory
- inaccurate
- unrelated to the requirements of the assignment
- not referenced to the specifics of the work

Apparently most students are loath to find fault with one another's products, or at least loath to express those faults (Strachan and Wilcox 1996; Pond, Ulhaq, and Wade 1995; Falchikov 1995; Williams 1992; Byard 1989). In particular, students do not want to be responsible for lowering a fellow student's grade. In addition, they may fear "If I do it to them, they'll do it to me," or they may be concerned that giving insightful critiques may raise the instructor's grading standards. They

may reason that the instructor will think, "If students are so good at picking out weaknesses of others, then there is no excuse for their handing in their own work with weaknesses."

When all is said and done, the problems with student peer feedback seem to boil down to three: the intrusion of students' emotions into the evaluative process, their ignorance of professional expectations and standards for various types of work, and their laziness in studying the work and/or in writing up the feedback. Emotion, ignorance, and laziness are formidable barriers, especially in combination.

Students no doubt are aware of these problems, and so it is little wonder that some pay scant attention to the feedback of peers. As is traditional, they look solely to the instructor, who is the only person they have to please and therefore the only real audience. When that happens, student peer feedback defeats much of its purpose. Public writing and speaking are media to impress the instructor for a grade rather than genuine means of communication.

The Problem: The Questions

But does all the blame lie with the students? They are merely responding to questions on forms that instructors have developed. Perhaps the questions themselves are flawed when posed to students. So it is worth examining some typical questions from real student peer feedback forms. I adapted the following questions from actual forms from several universities:

- Is the title of this paper appropriate and interesting? Is it too general or too specific?
- Is the central idea clear throughout the paper?
- Does the opening paragraph accurately state the position that the rest of the paper takes?
- Does the opening paragraph capture your attention?
- Is the paper well written?
- Is sufficient background provided?
- How logical is the organization of the paper?
- Are the illustrations (visuals) effective?
- Are the illustrations (visuals) easy to understand?

- Are the data clearly presented?
- Are the graphs and tables explained sufficiently in the text?
- How strong is the evidence used to support the argument or viewpoint?
- How well has the writer interpreted the significance of the results in relation to the research goals stated in the introduction?
- Does the essay prove its point? If not, why not?
- Does the conclusion adequately summarize the main points made in the paper?
- Below is a list of dimensions on which an oral presentation can be evaluated. For each dimension, rate your peer's presentation as "excellent," "good," "adequate," "needs some work," or "needs a lot of work."

Many or all of these questions are indeed likely to evoke emotions in students that they would not in scholars. All of the items demand that the student arrive at a judgment about a peer. They have to find or not find fault with a fellow student's work, and students are not typically predisposed to judge a peer's product unfavorably. The personal aspect further intrudes; the peer may be a friend or an acquaintance. On the other side, the peer may evoke dislike or hard feelings that may interfere with a balanced judgment.

To scholars the questions look quite different, and they imply a multidimensional evaluative continuum. A scholar's reasoning is more complex: The paper is effectively written in terms of A, B, and C but is somewhat weak on the X, Y, and Z criteria. The evidence supports the main hypothesis but is ambiguous on the secondary one.

Maybe most students lack the disciplinary background to respond to the questions at an adequate level of sophistication. They simply do not know how to give helpful feedback (Svinicki 2001). After all, many students are not even vaguely familiar with the standards for quality work in a given field, especially in a field that is not their major. Even most Ph.D. candidates lack the critical savvy and discrimination to produce an acceptable product in the first draft of their dissertation. Certainly if the students knew how to write a focused paper, how much

background to supply, how to structure an argument, and so forth, they would do so, if for no other reason than a good grade.

Perhaps, too, the items on most peer feedback forms permit laxness. Some explicitly ask for only a yes/no response, which is all that many students will feel obligated to give. In addition, the questions almost always ask for an "opinion." In the relativistic mind of the traditionally young undergraduate, one opinion may be as good as another, justified or not (Perry 1968). Besides, few questions demand a reasoned justification for the judgment made or a specific reference to the particulars of the work.

If judgment questions do not evoke fair-minded, well informed, and thorough evaluations from students, what can instructors do to teach students how to examine a work carefully and give constructive feedback?

A Solution: A Different Kind of Feedback Item

I propose writing a different kind of peer feedback item—one that does not ask for a judgment or opinion and so evokes no emotion; one that any student, no matter how unfamiliar with the discipline's rules, is capable of answering; and one that demands that students carefully attend to the details of the work in question, whether it be a written paper to read, a oral presentation to listen to, or a visual product to experience. Furthermore, if the instructor wishes to grade the peer feedback that students provide, the quality of the answers is quite easy to assess.

Let us consider the following sample items and what they are asking the students to do:

- What one or two adjectives (aside from "short," "long," "good," or "bad") would you choose to describe the title of the paper/speech?
- What do you think is the thesis of the paper/speech? Paraphrase it below.
- Put stars around the sentence that you believe is the thesis statement in this paper.
- In one or two sentences only, state in your own words what you think the writer's/speaker's position is.
- At what point in the paper/speech did you identify the thesis?

- List below the main points of the paper/speech/project.
- Outline this paper/speech/project on the back of this sheet.
- What are the writer's/speaker's justifications (readings, logic, evidence, etc.) for taking the positions that he or she does?
- List the types of supporting evidence and/or experiences given in the paper/speech.
- What do you think is the strongest evidence for the writer's/speaker's position? Why?
- What do you think is the weakest evidence for the writer's/speaker's position? Why?
- In each paragraph of the paper, underline the topic sentence.
- Underline all the logical transitions you come across in the paper.
- Highlight (in color) any passages that you had to read more than once to understand what the writer was saying.
- Bracket any sentences that you find particularly strong or effective.
- Put a checkmark in the margin next to any line that has a spelling, grammar, punctuation, or mechanical error. Let the writer identify and correct the error.
- What do you find most compelling about the paper/speech/project?
- After reading the paper/listening to the speech, do you agree or disagree with the writer's/speaker's position? Why or why not?
- As a member of the intended audience, what questions would you have after reading the paper/listening to the speech?

What are some of the distinguishing features of these items, especially as they compare to the first set of questions? Most obviously, there are no yes/no questions. In fact, some of the items are not really questions at all; they are tasks or mini-assignments (e.g., to outline the work or list its main points). Even those items that are questions specify a task (e.g., to list justifications or to identify the strongest and the weakest evidence).

Consider what these items direct students to do: Rather than asking for a judgment or opinion, many of them ask students simply to identify (paraphrase, list, outline, star, underline, highlight, bracket, check) parts or features of the work

(the thesis, main points, evidence, justifications, topic sentences, transitions, misspellings, mechanical errors), as each student sees them. The remaining items ask students for their personal reactions to the work—not their judgment of aspects of the work as good or bad, but how they respond to or interpret it.

This approach to obtaining student peer feedback brings out the best in students and eliminates the typical problems listed earlier. First, identification and personal reaction items seem—and are—rather neutral. Therefore, they minimize the intrusion of emotions and risk. Students are not finding fault with a peer's product or deciding how good or bad it may be, and so their answers cannot possibly hurt a fellow student's grade, raise the grading bar for the class, or provoke retribution. Even picking out the strongest and weakest evidence is not emotionally charged as long as students understand that every piece of rhetoric has its most and least powerful arguments in the eye of every beholder. Students are accustomed to agreeing or disagreeing with each other, so this task should not lead to problematic feelings.

Secondly, any student who has read or listened to the work can give acceptable answers to the items. They require attention to the work but not a strong disciplinary background or discriminating judgment. In fact, they do not ask for a judgment at all. In Bloom's terms, they call for comprehension and analysis, but not the most challenging cognitive operation, evaluation. They ask students to go on a scavenger hunt for pieces of the work or to identify and describe their nonjudgmental reactions to it. If a peer feedback form were to include all the questions above, students would need only basic knowledge about essay writing, rhetoric, parts of speech, punctuation, grammar, and sentence mechanics.

Thirdly, no student can ignore the work in question. The keen focus and attention to detail that these items require prevent once-over skimming or lazy listening. To pick out aspects of content, organization, and mechanics in a paper may require three or more readings. In fact, although all the items may be doable, they are not necessarily quick and easy to answer. They force a student to learn. They

demand that he or she actively practice the lessons in the readings and classes about essay/speech construction, organization, argumentation, types of evidence, active listening, style, grammar, mechanics, and intended audience.

The Value of Student Peer Feedback

Instructors who have used judgment-based peer feedback forms know that students give a great deal of erroneous feedback to one another. Many of the errors are those of omission—a failure to point out problems and mistakes in the work. Typically, then, the recipient of the peer feedback believes that his work is of higher quality than it actually is, and than the instructor thinks. No doubt many students find peer feedback misleading and even useless because they feel that the real audience is the instructor anyway.

Instructors can raise the quality of the peer feedback by grading it, but reading and commenting on all the written answers presents a formidable task, one less feasible as class size increases. Judgment-question answers are not easy to grade, as there are no absolute right or wrong answers. There are only more or less defensible judgments, and an instructor must give a careful reading to each answer to see how well justified each one is.

However, with identification and personal-reaction feedback items, students cannot give erroneous feedback, as long as they respond in good faith. How can a student's honest perception be wrong? This statement may sound radically naïve, but an example should serve to clarify its meaning.

Let's say a student writes a paper with the intended thesis that a particular gun-control bill being considered by a House committee should be passed. The three peer reviewers fill out a feedback form that asks them, among other things, to identify the thesis of the paper. The first student reads the paper just as the writer intended and says that the paper argues in favor of a particular gun-control bill being considered by a House committee. The second student identifies the thesis differently—that the Second Amendment should be amended to reflect the particular gun-control bill. The third believes that the paper contends that the House

should repeal the Second Amendment. What does this feedback, some of which could be seen as erroneous, mean to the recipient? It means that she did not make herself completely understood by a significant part of her audience. It means she should revise her paper to make her thesis clearer. Perhaps she should even add a sentence or two stating what she is not arguing.

Similarly, if a couple of peer reviewers say that they did not know the thesis until the conclusion, the writer (or speaker) should consider reinforcing the thesis early on. If most of the reviewers miss a main point, a key justification, or an important piece of evidence, the writer knows that part of his or her message was missed and should be emphasized.

The personal reactions of reviewers can also provide helpful information. What audience members find to be the strongest and weakest evidence tells the writer which content to highlight and which to downplay or edit out. What they identify as "particularly strong or effective" identifies what the writer is doing right and should do more often. Whether he or she actually changed any of the audience members' minds demonstrates just how effective the argument was, which should be of primary interest to any writer or speaker. Peer feedback informs self-assessment, an especially effective process for enhancing learning (Boud, Cohen, and Sampson 1999; Boud 1995).

When instructors distribute feedback forms with identification and personal-reaction items, fellow students constitute a genuine audience, and their feedback is meaningful. They cannot fake an "uncritical" answer that reflects just what the writer intended. As writers and speakers, students realize that their purpose—and the appropriate measure of their success—is to communicate, to help the audience understand their point.

Is it possible that some students may be lazy audience members and may miss some points that are perfectly clear in the text? Yes, of course, but they reflect the reality that in any true readership or audience, some members will be half-listening. Still, some articles and speeches are written and delivered so effectively that they compel people's attention. The lesson here is to express oneself so clear-

ly and powerfully that almost no one tunes out.

Instructors who wish to grade this type of feedback can still do so, but the criteria must be different. They cannot assess the feedback for "accuracy" or "defensibility" because it is purely perceptual. All that they can judge is the extent to which the answers reflect a good faith effort. Did the student respond to all the items? Are the answers reasonable? Grading on these criteria should be much easier than evaluating the defensibility of and justifications for judgments.

Conclusion

There is no question that peer feedback can be very valuable to students, and that learning how to give and take it is a crucial lifelong skill. Its value, however, is largely dependent on avoiding its various problems and pitfalls. By following two guidelines, instructors can greatly enhance its benefits:

- Instructors should present peer feedback items that ask students to identify or to personally react to defined parts of the paper, speech, or project.
- If fellow students are to provide honest and useful feedback, they should constitute the real audience, at least in the revision stages. This places students in the position of writing truly to communicate.

The feedback that students give under these conditions is less prone to the problems that plague judgment-based feedback—blandness, superficiality, inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and so forth—for several reasons. First, identification and personal reaction items do not have emotionally charged consequences for the feedback giver or recipient. Second, such items ask students to perform cognitive operations—primarily comprehension and analysis—rather than the more difficult and demanding process of evaluation. Third, the items do not allow students to gloss over a peer's paper or fade in and out of a speech. They require a thorough examination of the work in question, and instructors can grade peer feedback largely on the evidence of close attention.

Key words: peer feedback, assessment methods, evaluation, cooperative learning

NOTE

REFERENCES

Bangert-Drowns, R. L., C. L. C. Kulik, J. A. Kulik, and M. T. Morgan. 1991. The instructional effect of feedback in test-like events. *Review of Educational Research* 61:213–38.

Bloom, B. 1956. *Taxonomy of educational objectives.* New York: David McKay.

Boud, D. 1995. *Enhancing learning through self assessment, Vol. 1.* London and Philadelphia: Kogan Page.

Boud, D., R. Cohen, R. and J. Sampson. 1999. Peer learning assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 24: 413–26.

Byard, V. 1989. Power play: The use and abuse of power relationships in peer critiquing. Paper presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Seattle, WA, March.

Candy, P., G. Crebert, and J. O'Leary. 1994. *Developing lifelong learners through undergraduate education.* NBEET Commissioned Report No. 28. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services.

Crooks, T. J. 1988. The impact of classroom evaluation practices on students. *Review of Educational Research* 58:438–81.

Dancer, W. T., and J. Dancer. 1992. Peer rating in higher education. *Journal of Education for Business* 67:306–09.

Dochy, F., M. Segers, and D. Sluijsmans. 1999. The use of self-, peer and co-assessment in higher education: A review. *Studies in Higher Education* 24:331–50.

Falchikov, N. 1995. Peer feedback marking: Developing peer assessment. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 32:175–87.

Fry, S. A. 1990. Implementation and evaluation of peer marking in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 15:177–89.

McDowell, L. 1995. The impact of innovative assessment on student learning. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 32:302–13.

Mowl, G., and R. Pain. 1995. Using self and peer assessment to improve students' essay writing: A case study from geography. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 32:324–35.

Orsmond, P., S. Merry, and K. Reitch. 1996. The importance of marking criteria in the use of peer assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 21: 239–49.

Oldfield, K. A., and J. M. K. Macalpine. 1995. Peer and self-assessment at the tertiary level: An experiential report. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 20:125–32.

Perry, W. G. 1968. *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Pond, K., R. Ulhaq, and W. Wade. 1995. Peer-review: A precursor to peer assessment. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 32:314–23.

Rushton, C., P. Ramsey, and R. Rada. 1993. Peer assessment in a collaborative hypermedia environment: A case study. *Journal of Computer-Based Instruction* 20:75–80.

Slavin, R. E. 1990. Research on cooperative learning: Consensus and controversy. *Educational Leadership* 47:52–54.

Stefani, L. A. J. 1992. Comparison of collaborative self, peer and tutor assessment in a biochemistry practical. *Biochemical Education* 20:148–51.

Strachan, I. B., and S. Wilcox. 1996. Peer and self-assessment of group work: Developing an effective response to increased enrollment in a third-year course in microclimatology. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 20:343–53.

Svinicki, M. D. 2001. Encouraging your students to give feedback. In *New Directions in Teaching and Learning, No. 87.* K. C. Lewis, ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, I. 1995. Understanding computer software: Using peer tutoring in the development of understanding of some aspects of computer software. In *Enhancing student learning through peer tutoring in higher education.* S. Griffiths, K. Houston, and A. Lazenblatt, Coleraine, eds. Northern Ireland: University of Ulster.

Topping, K. 1998. Peer-assessment between students in colleges and universities. *Review of Educational Research* 68: 249–76.

Watson, H. M. 1989. Report on the first year of research into developing an evaluative technique for assessing seminar work. *Collected Original Resources in Education (CORE)* 13 (2): Fiche 12 C1.

Williams, E. 1992. Student attitudes towards approaches to learning and assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 17:45–58.

Peer Review Worksheet   Your Name:
Sequence #3: Research Paper   Writer's Name:

After you and your partner have read your essays out loud and discussed them, respond to the following questions. Give this written evaluation to your partner so he/she can take it home and have your comments to reflect on during revision. **Your evaluation must be turned in to me on Tuesday; it is part of your grade!**

I. Introduction

    a. Write here the sentence(s) that you think is the thesis (the writer's **angle**). Does the thesis appropriately and accurately reflect the scope of the essay, or should it be revised in any way?

    b. Does the writer introduce the topic in a way that is *informative* and *interesting*? If not, how could it be improved?

II. Body

    a. Does each paragraph develop from **one** main point, presented in the topic sentence? Note for the writer if he or she introduces a separate topic mid-paragraph.

    b. Does the writer incorporate **and contextualize** evidence from outside sources (through summary or direct quotes) in appropriate places? Are there any paragraphs where you, as a reader, would benefit from more information?

c. Does the writer use effective transitions between paragraphs? Mark any areas where a transition is needed, or where the writer abruptly jumps from one topic to the next.

III. Conclusion

   a. Upon finishing the paper, do you feel fully informed on the topic? What questions remain that you would want the writer to answer?

IV. Does the essay clearly and completely respond to the prompt? Refer directly back to the assignment sheet in order to check this question.

V. MLA/Global Concerns

Does the writer incorporate at least 5 sources in the paper?	Yes | No
Is the paper at least 5 full pages long?	Yes | No
Is the paper double-spaced?	Yes | No
Are the margins 1 inch wide?	Yes | No
Does the writer use size 12, Times New Roman or Calibri font?	Yes | No
Does the essay have a unique title related to the topic of the paper?	Yes | No

Other Comments (I suggest making a short list of your comments to remind the writer of what to work on here):

Guidelines for Peer Consulting

Switch papers with your partner. You will take turns reading each other's papers out loud, just as you would do in the Writing Center. Your roles as reader/consultant and listener/consultee are equally important. Therefore, here are some guidelines to follow and questions to keep in mind.

When you are the reader/consultant:

- Read the paper *out loud* as it appears. Do not automatically add in missing words or word endings. This will help you and the listener spot these typos.

- If you do not understand a paragraph, a sentence, or a word, stop reading and discuss your questions with the consultee. This will signal to the consultee that something needs added or clarified at that point in the paper.

- Encourage your consultee to write in corrections or make notes as you discuss; do not save all your comments or corrections for the end.

Besides making surface-level corrections, here are some main questions to keep in mind as you are reading and evaluating:
1. Were you easily able to identify a thesis? Was that thesis worded strongly, to signal what was going to be explored in the paper? Does the thesis make an argument?
2. Does the thesis correspond with the purpose of this assignment?
3. Does each paragraph explore *one* main idea?
4. Is the textual evidence used and cited properly?
5. Does the introduction outline the paper's ideas, avoiding general statements?
6. Does the conclusion tie the paper together, review what was discussed?
7. Does the paper use the elements of academic writing from the handouts on Canvas and from *They Say/I Say*?

The more conversation you have, the more helpful your consultation will be!

When you are the listener/consultee:
- Listen to what you have written as it is being read. The purpose of having someone read your paper out loud is for you to hear it.
- If your consultant asks for clarification, take note; that should signal to you that you might need to add more information or adjust your wording for the reader's sake.
- Keep a pen or pencil in your hand. If you hear something you want to change, stop the reader and make a note of it. You might forget what to revise if you don't write it down!

Here are some questions to think about:
1. Do your main points clearly connect back to your thesis?
2. Is your introduction clear, does it provide clear summaries of source text(s), and does it include a clear thesis?
3. Does the consultant stumble over wordy phrases or long sentences? If the consultant has trouble reading something *out loud*, it will probably be difficult to read and understand on paper as well.
4. At the conclusion and final sentence of the paper, are you confident that you have left your audience with something memorable about your ideas?

Even though you already know what you wrote, try to be a critical and attentive listener who knows nothing about the topic. This will help you when it comes to revising your draft!

Peer Editing Instructions

Writer:
1. Provide your group member with copies of your paper.   (Optional)
2. Read your piece aloud.
3. Ask, "Any questions or comments?" after reading it.
4. Ask the group one or two questions you have about the piece.
5. Listen to the editors' feedback.
6. Choose the next reader.

Editor:
1. Concentrate on what the writer reads to you.
2. Tell the writer what you liked and/or disliked about the essay.
3. Ask the writer any questions you have about the essay.
4. Tell the writer anything you would like to know more about the essay.
5. Offer suggestions for what steps the writer might take next to improve the essay, focusing on the scoring rubric.

Your aims as a peer editor
1. Help the writer discover new ideas/insight about her or his topic.
2. Help the writer know where to add information.
3. Help the writer decide what to do next with the essay.
4. Ask questions to identify confusing/interesting/unclear parts of the piece.
5. *Most importantly*, make sure the writer leaves the group with enough direction and support that he or she wants to go back to the piece and work on it more.

Things to Consider while Listening:
Are claims supported appropriately? Are the author's assumptions about audience appropriate? Is the author credible? Does the author write well to a skeptical audience?

Some reasons groups struggle:
- Writers give the impression that they don't want any advice by giving peers incomplete drafts or "finished" drafts.
- Group members are afraid of hurting someone's feelings by disagreeing or criticizing.
- A writer disagrees with the responses they receive.
- A writer doesn't feel listened to by group members.
- Responses are too general, i.e.: "this is good." Specific suggestions aren't given to a writer.
- A writer doesn't understand how to revise or doesn't care enough about the paper to revise.

Peer Observations . . . Part of the Writing Process

- First, pair up into smaller groups of two or three students. Each person in the smaller group should first write two questions or comments about his/her rough draft. Then, each person should read his/her paper aloud . . . the rest of the group will listen and respond to the following questions and suggestions.

- Without rereading, recall the most memorable points. These may be positive, negative, confusing, spectacular: "This is what struck me as I listened."

- Jot down ideas or questions you want to raise.

- Summarize the writer's point: "This is what I think you're trying to say."

- Respond honestly and thoroughly to the writer's specific questions.

- Talk through ideas for the essay.

Your name: _____ Writer's name:_____

Thank you for reviewing my paper. I'd appreciate your comments on these issues, questions, or concerns:

_____
Writer's Name

Reviewer: _____(Name)

Responses to your issues, questions, or concerns:

You have made your case effectively. I especially liked . . .

You might include clearer or more supports here . . .

Your introduction and conclusion were . . .

On a scale of 1 to 6 . . .

Observations on Your Paper

Writer _____: Comments, questions about my paper:

Readers_____:

FOCUS: Is there a good balance between textual supports and personal opinions, observations, experiences.   Are the ideas cohesive and relevant throughout the paper?

DEVELOPMENT: Does the writer present an interesting way of seeing the topic? Are ideas supported by textual support, observations, and/or experiences? Is there a good balance between general statements and specific examples?

ORGANIZATION: Does the writer set the scene in the introduction? Does the conclusion leave you with some relevant thoughts about the subject? Are the ideas presented in an organized, relevant manner? Are the transitions between sentences and paragraphs smooth and clear? Are the paragraphs effective?

STYLE: Is the paper interesting and easy to read? Are the sentences clear? Is there a good variety of sentences? Does the vocabulary fit the topic? Does the writer tend to repeat words or ideas? If so, is it effective or just repetitious?

MECHANICS: This is where you look at typos, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Are sources cited correctly? This is minor in the rough draft, but important in the final draft.

 OVERALL RESPONSE:
What is the essay's greatest strength? What part did you most enjoy?

What would you suggest for overall improvement? What parts were not clear? What would you like to learn more about?

Pace
EN 125
Fall 2017

PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE

Overview
For Monday, November 12, bring in a copy of your Assignment #3 draft for someone in your small group. Please, make sure your partner has a copy of your paper or that your partner has access to a draft via laptop. Please keep in mind:

Protocol
When you arrive in class on Monday, please immediately gather in groups, pass out a copy of your paper to your partner, and then do the following:

- One, I want you to take turns reading your paper out loud to your partner. When you read, please read slowly and clearly, so that your partner can follow along carefully.

- Two, your partner will assume different roles as they listen along:
  - One, read for development of the essay's main idea or focus, specifically the way the writer creates a research space.
  - Two, read for the use of outside readings and research to develop the main ideas, focusing on how the essay develops body paragraphs and brings in a naysayer.
  - Three, read for issues of style we have addressed this semester: framing quotes, addressing cohesion, coherence, saying why it matters, distinguishing what you say from what the sources say.

- Finally, what are two or three revision suggestions you have for the writer that may not have come up in the above areas?

After you have finished reading, please respond to the specific questions below, writing suggestions/advice in the margins of the writer's paper.

Then, in your writer's memo, when you turn in your paper on November 16, please include the suggestions your group gave you during peer review and how you incorporated their suggestions in your revision.

1. **C.A.R.S (Creating A Research Space)**
- Does the paper focus on a main idea or focus? If not, what suggestion do you have for that writer to make sure the paper is focused?
- Make sure the writer specifies to you which audience he or she chose for this essay.
- Does the writer make choices in their writing that appeal to the audience he or she chose? If so, make sure to point those out. If not, suggest ways that writer can revise their writing to fit the chosen audience.
- Does the draft's introduction follow the elements of introductions we addressed in class?
    - A "they say" moment?
    - Clear, well-articulated thesis that makes a claim about the topic.
    - Forecasts how the thesis will be supported by outlining the structure of the paper.
    - Articulates why the topic is important or why it matters to the audience.

2. **Outside Readings and Research**
- Does the paper use outside readings and research to develop main ideas? If so, point out strong uses of outside material. If not, please suggest ways the writer can use outside research to develop his/her ideas more fully.
- Do the writer's body paragraphs feature topic sentences, evidence and reasons to support the topic sentence, and analysis of the evidence to show how it supports the paper's main thesis?
- Does the writer bring in a naysayer? Does the writer summarize the counterargument fairly and objectively? Does the writer then show how stronger his/her argument is to the naysayer?

3. **Sentence-Level Style**
- Does the writer address issues of style we have addressed this semester?
    - Cohesion and coherence.
    - Weak v. Strong verbs
    - Actions and characters
    - Does the writer use the elements of *They Say/I Say* appropriately to integrate outside research by framing quotes?

Peer Review: Assignment #1

Peer review is an important part of this seminar for several reasons. It is helpful to get feedback from other writers, even—perhaps especially—writers with very different styles or perspectives or skills. It is also extremely useful to practice reviewing and workshopping other essays, both because many flaws are easier to see in someone else's paper and because this kind of joint work will be a part of your future academic and professional work. This will be part of your class participation grade, and of course your classmates are looking forward to your productive responses.

For peer review, respond to each of the prompts below by identifying where the paper performs those things effectively, while providing suggestions for how those areas need improvement. Make sure you provide feedback on each paper. Email your response to the author and to me by Friday at midnight. Exchange email addresses now if you don't have them.

You may also create a group Google Docs for your peer review group, where you can each access one another's papers via Google Docs. Regardless, make sure you write a response for each paper and email it to me and to the writer.

Questions for reading drafts:

- Summarize the author's argument/thesis below. Underline on the draft where you think the thesis is.

- Paraphrase the "they say" moment in the introduction. If you cannot find one, suggest 1-2 ways for the writer to include one.

- List the major arguments, whether explicitly or implicitly stated. If not, suggest a way(s) for the writer to clarify the argument and evidence.

- Underline a section where evidence from the text is used well.

- Identify and summarize a section where evidence (or more evidence) is needed.

- Underline a paragraph or section where the author incorporates quotes particularly well.

- Highlight a section where you begin to get confused.

- Identify a place where the writer summarizes source material effectively. If not, identify where the writer could use templates and strategies from *They Say/I Say* to improve how they summarize.

- As a part of the intended audience, what questions do you have after reading this paper?

- If any questions were raised in the cover letter, answer them.

Guidelines for "Writing Center" Consulting in First-Year Writing

Switch papers with your partner. You will take turns reading each other's papers out loud; this is the procedure that is followed in the Writing Center. Your roles as reader/consultant and listener/consultee are equally important. Therefore, here are some guidelines to follow and questions to keep in mind.

*When you are the reader/consultant:
-Read the paper *out loud* as it appears. Do not automatically add in missing words or word endings. This will help you and the listener spot these typos.
-Look especially at the organization of the paper. Ensure that the writer provided enough details in the body paragraphs to make the points he or she is making completely clear, providing evidence if necessary.
-Encourage the writer to write in corrections or make notes as you discuss; do not save all your comments or corrections for the end.

Besides making surface-level corrections, here are some main questions to keep in mind as you are reading and evaluating:
1. Can you locate a thesis? Is that thesis statement specific, and does it encapsulate the paper thoroughly?
2. Does the essay have a catchy and intriguing title?
3. Is the introduction interesting? Does the writer draw you in immediately?
4. Is there *one* idea explored in each paragraph? Are there transitions between these paragraphs?
6. Does the essay transition into a conclusion, ending the paper without feeling "cut off"?
7. Does the essay respond fully and adequately to the assignment? Does it follow all of the proper formatting guidelines?

The more conversation you have, the more helpful your consultation will be!

*When you are the listener/consultee:
-Listen to what you have written as it is being read. The purpose of having someone read your paper out loud is for you to *hear* it.
-If your consultant asks for clarification, take note; that should signal to you that you might need to add more information or adjust your wording for the reader's sake—especially when trying to convince your reader of your particular stance.
-Keep a pen or pencil in your hand. If you hear something you want to change, stop the reader and make a note of it. You might forget what to revise if you don't write it down!

Here are some questions to think about:
1. Does the summary give you enough information that you feel like you know what the writer talked about, or are there too few or too many details?
2. If you were not the writer of your essay, upon hearing the introduction, would you want to read the essay?
3. Does the consultant stumble over wordy phrases or long sentences? If the consultant has trouble reading something *out loud*, it will probably be difficult to read and understand on paper as well.
4. At the conclusion and final sentence of the paper, are you confident that you have left your audience with a clear understanding of your essay's content?
5. Does your essay follow a clear progression, drawing readers in with the introduction and leaving them with something important to think about?

Even though you already know what you wrote, try to be a critical and attentive listener who knows nothing about the topic. This will help you when it comes to revising your draft!

WORKSHEET FOR ROUGH DRAFT OF ESSAY #1
Rhetorical Analysis Choice

As you read through your colleague's draft, keep in mind several points. You are to respond as a reader—what do you "see" or don't see in the essay. What would you want or expect to see? Keep in mind that the more *specific (both in presenting evidence and in analysis)* the writer is, the more successful the paper usually is. Remember to respond: tactfully and specifically. There is no need to be curt or rude. Your goal is to "help" the writer improve their writing.

So: read the essay through. ***Underline passages*** (phrase, sentences, and words) that you really like ***with a straight line***. Put your initials next to it and tell why. ***Underline passages with a squiggly line*** what you don't understand or what you think needs work. Put your initials next to it and tell why. You can write a short note next to the underline with suggestions.

Then:

Introduction:

1. **a)** Write here what you think the thesis/claim of the argument is? **b)** Does it clearly state whether the writer finds the original essay successful/unsuccessful/stupid/effective/whatever? **YES/NO.** If no, then what is missing (does it argue content over rhetorical analysis?)

2. What elements from rhetorical analysis does the intro claim it is going to discuss in the body of the essay? List them out here.

Body:

3. Does each body paragraph have "a reason" that the text is successful or not? **YES/NO**?

4. Does each paragraph contain at least 1 ***specific*** (i.e. can you "see" it) example from the cultural text to support the thesis? **YES/NO**. If there is a **NO**, put 2 stars at the beginning of that paragraph and tell what is missing.

5. After each specific reason and example, is there some analysis of why that example is successful or not? If there is none, put a triangle next to the paragraph.

6. Look at the structure/organization of the body paragraphs. **a)** Are they positioned correctly? **YES/NO**. **b**) Would you move any paragraphs within the body? **YES/NO**. **c)** If there are reasons listed in the thesis, do the body paragraphs match that thesis? **YES/NO**?

Conclusion:

7. Do you think the conclusion sums up the overall argument? **YES/NO**?
8. Does the conclusion clearly reiterate the writer's stance/analysis of the cultural text? **YES/NO**?

Mechanics:

9. Look at the overall essay: a) Quotes: do they have "" around them?

   b) Do quotes have end parenthetical citation?

   c) Is the first word in the in-text the same as the first word in the Works Cited?

   d) If there is a summary or paraphrase within a paragraph, it should be cited as one would a quote. Are these cited correctly?

   Point out to the writer where citations need to be addressed.

10. Works Cited Page: Look at the citation for correctness. Call up OWL (within blackboard) and work with the writer to make the citation as correct as possible. You can call me over if you are not sure.