

ENG1101 | Fall 2014 | Dr. Jason W. Ellis

**Introduction**

Writing the Brain is an opportunity for you to exercise your rhetorical choices across a series of multimodal artifacts that you will assemble ultimately into a blog post on our class website. You will practice some of the things that we learn about the brain (mindfulness, reflection, and multimodal synergy) and build WOVEN artifacts using all of the main modes of modern human communication: written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal.

Through the Writing the Brain project, you will collect your thoughts in writing, express your most important thoughts visually in photos, and reflect on your thinking in a long-form essay. Each part leads to the next and the final component—a blog post on our class website—ties all of the parts together into a unified whole. Additionally, you will practice citation and professional styles, which you will use more in the final project in our class and throughout your future academic work.

Audience is an important and necessary consideration for any communication and composition that you endeavor. You should imagine your audience to be your peers—other beginning college students. However, you also need to consider the genre conventions of each medium: handwriting, photos, essay, and blog post.

To receive credit for this project, you must complete it in its entirety and meet the process-driven deadlines. This is a writing-intensive project that I have designed to be done over time. Each part is spread out to give each student the time necessary to complete it before moving to the next component. It is important for your personal success on this project to proceed according to the schedule below.

**Part 1: Thinking in Writing (i.e., Write Down Your Thoughts)**

Choose a full day to carry your notebook (or notepad) with you. At least once every thirty minutes (at the top of the hour and at the bottom of the hour), spent a few minutes writing down what you have been or currently are thinking about. Include additional information that provides context such as where you are, what you were doing, and whom you were with. Since you will be sharing your thoughts with others, you may omit those thoughts that we all have that might be inappropriate to share with others. Instead, record thoughts that you might share with others: about the past, about the present, and about the future. Some of your thoughts might be mundanely in the present (e.g., what do I want to have for lunch? Or how do I fix this computer problem?), others might be about your past (about your personal life, your school experiences, etc.), and others might be about your future (Will I graduate on time? What classes do I need to take next semester? What kind of job can I get after I graduate?). Whatever your thoughts are, write them down at the top of the hour and the bottom of the hour. Sometimes when you write down your thoughts, you might have more to write than at others. However, you should always write down something on the half hour—everyone has plenty of thoughts throughout the day to record!

Next, type up your written notes into comment to the blog post on our OpenLab site titled, “Project 1: Thinking in Writing.” When you type your handwritten notes, you may edit them to make them more easily readable, and you should add additional context that you might not have had a chance to write down during your day of thought note taking. Remember to think about audience and what thoughts are appropriate to include in this public-facing assignment. I do not want to discount any of your thoughts, but you need to choose between those that fit the purposes of this assignment and reserve others for your own purposes as a reflective practioner—someone who reflects on their thinking and decision making as a part of their everyday practices.

**Part 2: Thinking Visually (i.e., Represent Your Thoughts as Photos)**

Look at your day of thoughts and think about what are the most important things that you were thinking about. These should be the things that you think are the most important to you or should be the most important to you (sometimes we do not always think what is most important to us is the same as what should be most important to us).

After you’ve identified your most important thoughts, patterns of thoughts, or themes of thought, imagine how you can represent them visually. This is a kind of translation. Taking your words, ideas, and thoughts, and translating them into a visual expression. This might involve taking photos of places, people, or objects that remind you of those thoughts. It might involve taking photos of things that represent your thoughts metaphorically. Using any kind of photo-taking technology that you have at hand (a smartphone, a tablet, a digital camera, a 35mm camera, a Polaroid camera, etc.), take as many photos as possible that capture your most important thoughts visually. This will result in you having a portfolio of images to choose from for this project. Sort through the photos that you have taken, and choose several (3-4) that you like the best and that represent your thoughts the best.

Keep a digital copy of these for your final blog post, and print out hard copies to show during peer review in class (these print outs can be made professionally, on your home printer, or on a lab color printer).

**Part 3: Thinking Rhetorically and Reflectively (i.e., Reflect on Your Thoughts and Plan Your Future Thoughts in an Essay)**

I would like you to think of the work that you did in parts one and two as building a personal data set. The things that you wrote down and took pictures of are creations by you that say something about who you are. Each note and photo are a bit of data about you that was also created by you. In the essay part of the first project, you will cite some of this data that you have made in your essay about your thinking as it currently is and how you would like to take form into the future.

You will write an essay that is at least 1,250 words long (about five pages, double-spaced) that makes an argument about how your current thinking relates to your future personal, academic, and/or professional life. Some suggestions about the kind of argument your essay might take: I argue that my current thinking is focused on the things that will enable my future success; I argue that my thoughts are all over the place and I need to work on focusing them on the things that matter; or I argue that my thoughts are focused on important things in my life in the present. These are only three suggestions. There are other directions that you can take your essay. However, I would like you to find one approach or what we call a unity of thought and write your essay with this one approach in mind.

While there are different ways to write you essay, I will recommend this overall layout. First, begin with a paragraph introducing yourself, the fact that you have been reflecting on your thoughts, and your argument for the essay. Next, write subsequent paragraphs that support your argument by drawing on specific examples from your day of recording thoughts and photos representing your thoughts. Each example should have its own paragraph and each quote or photo should be cited using MLA formatting (we will discuss this in class in more detail—also refer to the writing handbook). Then, consider any challenges to your argument in the next-to-last paragraph or interwoven into the preceding paragraphs, and explain how your argument still is correct. Finally, conclude your essay with a plan for how you want to think and how you can reflect on your thinking moving forward.

You will write a draft of your essay using word processing software or services like Microsoft Word or Google Docs. This will allow you to run spelling and grammar checks on your writing before bringing it in for peer review. On the day that we perform peer review, you will print out three copies to give to your teammates for in-class review and feedback. I will help you with this process of peer reviewing.

After peer reviewing your essay, you will create a blog post on our OpenLab website. These are the guidelines for the post and its overall design:

1. Login to OpenLab and navigate to our class’ site.
2. Mouse over the + sign on our site’s gray menu bar and click on “Post.”
3. You will now be on the Add New Post page.
4. Where it says, “Enter title here,” click and type in a meaningful title for your post: “Writing My Brain Project by [your first and last name].”
5. In the large white box beneath the title, you can type or copy-and-paste the writing that you have done elsewhere. This is where you will create your Project 1 blog post.
6. Your post should have these main section headings with your response beneath each one:
   1. Introduction
      1. Write a three or four sentences description in your own words of what you did in Project 1. Do not frame this in terms of, “Professor Ellis had us do this and this.” Instead, take ownership of your project. For example, “In this project, I had an opportunity to reflect on my thoughts and plan how to think more effectively in the future.”
   2. Thinking in Writing
      1. Copy and paste your typed up list of thoughts from the first part.
   3. Thinking Visually
      1. For this part of the blog post, you will get to embed your images using another website: Flickr.com. If you do not have an account for Flickr or Yahoo (which owns Flickr), you can easily get an account at flickr.com.
      2. After creating an account, you will click Upload at the top of the Flickr menu bar and upload the three or four images that you thought best represented your thinking in part one.
      3. Then, click You > Photostream > click the first image that you would like to use so that it fills your web browser window. Click into the address bar of your web browser and copy the link.
      4. Paste the link for the first image into this section of your blog post. Type a description for the photo beneath it.
      5. Copy and paste the links to the other images by moving through your photostream.
   4. Thinking Rhetorically and Reflectively
      1. Copy and paste the final draft of your essay including Works Cited section here. You might have to work on the formatting using the word processing tools built into Wordpress (e.g., centering text).

**Project 1 Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Day | Date | Reading | Work | **Due** |
| 3 | M | 9/15 | Gary Marcus’ *Kluge* chapter 1. Download from OpenLab. Bring a printed copy to class.  **Introduce Project 1.** | Student-led introduction to the reading.  Plan the day that you would like to record your thoughts according to the instructions above. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.** |
|  | W | 9/17 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Introduction  John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Exercise.  Last day to drop class without a grade of “W” being assigned.  NB: Course withdrawal period begins on September 18. | Student-led introduction to the reading.  Remember to record your thoughts for a full day according to the instructions above. Then, type up your thoughts in a list and copy-and-paste your thoughts into a comment on the “Project 1: Thinking in Writing” OpenLab blog post before Monday’s class. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.** |
| 4 | M | 9/22 | Meet in the Library’s eclassroom (A540). |  | **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.**  **Blog: Comment on “Project 1: Thinking in Writing” blog post collecting your day of thoughts. Type up your handwritten thought notes and post a comment containing them.**  **Begin taking photos (with your phone, a camera, your iPod, your tablet—whatever you have access to with a camera) that capture what you were thinking about or represent what you were thinking about. Take as many possible. You will choose the best ones for use with your project.** |
|  | W | 9/24 | No class. |  |  |
| 5 | M | 9/29 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Survival. | Student-led introduction to the reading. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Bring three photo prints (you can print them on a color printer or have them professionally printed) that you took in reference to your day of thoughts.** |
|  | W | 10/1 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Wiring. | Student-led introduction to the reading.  In-class writing and workshopping on your Project 1 essay. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.** |
| 6 | M | 10/6 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Attention. | Student-led introduction to the reading.  In-class writing and workshopping on your Project 1 essay. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.**  **Bring three printed copies of your Project 1 Essay draft.** |
|  | W | 10/8 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Short-term memory. | Student-led introduction to the reading.  Demo on creating your Project One Blog Post that collects each part and presents it as a unified whole. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.** |
| 7 | M | 10/13 | No class. |  |  |
|  | W | 10/15 | John Medina’s *Brain Rules*, Long-term memory.  Introduce Project Two. | Student-led introduction to the reading. | **Three-ring Binder: Notes on today’s reading.**  **Blog: Comment on post for previous class’ reading.**  **Project One Blog Post Due on OpenLab.** |

**Holistic Grading**

I grade your work holistically. First, this means that your work must be complete, on time, and done using the writing process. If these components are not met, you will likely lose points. Second, I evaluate your work using the attached grading rubric. I deduct points from a maximum score of 100 based on the weaknesses that I might find in your work. I will include constructive criticism and advice with your grade. This feedback will be useful for your final portfolio. Third, your grade will likely be higher if you can develop more revisions of each part, because each revision is like a mathematically iteration bringing you closer to being a very effective communicator. However, this process only works when your revisions are substantial—going back to the foundations of your writing, composing, and ideas. Simply copyediting or proofreading in the revision process will help with the Conventions section of the rubric but not likely the other parts of the rubric. Carefully consider how you do use the revision process.

**Grading Rubric**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scale** | **Basic** | **Beginning** | **Developing** | **Competent** | **Mature** | **Exemplary** |
| **Rhetorical Awareness** Response to the situation/assignment, considering elements such as purpose, audience, register, and context | Ignores two or more aspects of the situation and thus does not fulfill the task | Ignores at least one aspect of the situation and thus compromises effectiveness | Attempts to respond to all aspects of the situation, but the attempt is insufficient or inappropriate | Addresses the situation in a complete but perfunctory or predictable way | Addresses the situation completely, with unexpected insight | Addresses the situation in a complete, sophisticated manner that could advance professional discourse on the topic |
| **Stance and Support** Argument, evidence, and analysis | Involves an unspecified or confusing argument; lacks appropriate evidence | Makes an overly general argument; has weak or contradictory evidence | Lacks a unified argument; lacks significance (“so what?”); lacks sufficient analysis | Offers a unified, significant, and common position with predictable evidence and analysis | Offers a unified, distinct position with compelling evidence and analysis | Offers an inventive, expert-like position with precise and convincing evidence and analysis |
| **Organization** Structure and coherence, including elements such as introductions and conclusions as well as logical connections within and among paragraphs (or other meaningful chunks) | Lacks unity in constituent parts  (such as paragraphs); fails to create coherence among constituent parts | Uses insufficient unifying statements (e.g., thesis statements, topic sentences, headings, or forecasting statements); uses few effective connections (e.g., transitions, match cuts, and hyperlinks) | Uses some effective unifying claims, but a few are unclear; makes connections weakly or inconsistently, as when claims appear as random lists or when paragraphs’ topics lack explicit ties to the thesis | States unifying claims with supporting points that relate clearly to the overall argument and employs an effective but mechanical scheme | Asserts and sustains a claim that develops progressively and adapts typical organizational schemes for the context, achieving substantive coherence | Asserts a sophisticated claim by incorporating diverse perspectives that are organized to achieve maximum coherence and momentum |
| **Conventions** Expectations for grammar, mechanics, style, citation, and genre | Involves errors that risk making the overall message distorted or incomprehensible | Involves a major pattern of errors | Involves some distracting errors | Meets expectations, with minor errors | Exceeds expectations  in a virtually flawless manner | Manipulates expectations in ways that advance the argument |
| **Design for Medium** Features that use affordances to enhance factors such as comprehensibility and usability | Lacks the features necessary for the genre; neglects significant affordances, such as linking on the web; uses features that conflict with or ignore the argument | Omits some important features; involves distracting inconsistencies in features (e.g., type and headings); uses features that don’t support argument | Uses features that support with argument, but some match imprecisely with content; involves minor omissions or inconsistencies | Supports the argument with features that are generally suited to genre and content | Promotes engagement and supports the argument with features that efficiently use affordances | Persuades with careful, seamless integration of features and content and with innovative use of affordances |

**Table 16.** Outcomes for English 1101 and English 1102 specified by the Board of Regents and by Georgia Tech’s Writing and Communication Program (NB: In each cell, one or more items separated by semicolons could apply)