

# NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## THE ANNUAL EVALUATION CONFERENCE MEMORANDUM For Academic Year 2014-2015

Faculty Member: Dr. Jason ELLIS  
Department: English  
Date of Conference: 7 May 2015  
Evaluator: Dr. Mary NILLES

This memorandum will discuss the total academic performance and professional progress of the candidate in the areas of Teaching, Research; Scholarly/ Creative/ Professional Activity; Service to the Department, College, University; Profession, and Community; as well as willingness to work with others for the good of the institution, and the candidate's goals for the coming academic year.

### TEACHING

#### Classroom Instruction and Student Evaluations

During 2014-2015, Dr. Ellis began his teaching career at City Tech. As he wrote in his PARSE, he has used this year to acclimate himself to "the needs of my students, department, and college, while continuing my scholarly and pedagogical research; to revise syllabi so as to meet the needs of the diverse City Tech student body." He taught four sections of ENG 1101, English Composition; and two sections of ENG 3771, Advanced Career Writing. He received excellent ratings for his teaching. I observed him and wrote an evaluation in Fall 2014; Dr. George Guida did the observation in Spring 2015.

I saw Dr. Ellis teach a section of ENG 1101 on 3 November 2014. His lesson, rated "excellent," evidenced solid experience gained while previously teaching at other institutions, including Georgia Tech. He was very well organized and challenged students to employ reading, writing, research, and computer skills as they planned their writing assignment. Students were to read the text, **Brain Rules**, and then write a paragraph that eventually would lead into a longer essay, the major project of the course.

This class, entitled "ENG 1101, Writing the Brain: Composition and Neuroscience," focused on two main ideas: Communication is rhetorical; and Communication is multimodal, or WOVEN (written, oral, visual, electronic, and non verbal.) The day's topic was on an issue of great personal importance to each student: choosing a major and planning a career. Everyone previously had researched and written a multi-modal blog post, and made a 5-minute Power Point-based presentation on their selected majors. In

this session, students reviewed the form and function of paragraphs; they worked in small groups to plan the expanded essay.

Dr. Ellis displayed mastery of the subject matter. His presentation was clear and engaging; He led the class step-by-step through the composition process. He encouraged everyone to strive for excellence. His standards were high; he had an excellent rapport with his students.

In March 2015, Dr. George Guida observed Professor Ellis in an ENG 3771 section. On this day Dr. Ellis brought his own employment experience into the classroom, and used it to make a point about the need to develop excellent writing skills and transfer them into the workplace. He emphasized that these skills would be portable as students moved along their career paths. He referenced the editing he had done while employed at MindSpring Enterprise in Atlanta (MindSpring merged with Earthlink in 2000; Dr. Ellis eventually became a professor at City Tech). He modeled a new work reality: students should develop a skill set that could be carried into various future jobs and careers.

Professor Guida noted the ease with which Dr. Ellis “wove OpenLab and projection into the fabric of the lesson;” the instructor tried to create a professional classroom environment, treating students as if they already were at work in an employee seminar. In this ambitious class, also rated “excellent,” Dr. Ellis used OpenLab to encourage and prompt student writing. Students used Power Point slides to structure their written and oral presentations. They were shown how to use their Google Drive accounts to organize and save data. Dr. Guida’s report concluded: “The day’s lesson was an interesting blend of traditional lecturing, student presentation and group work.” During his first year on campus, Dr. Ellis has demonstrated a solid command of the classroom; and an outstanding digital competence, appropriate for a professor who is helping develop the department’ new major in Professional and Technical Writing (PTW).

Dr. Ellis’ Student Opinion Reports reflected the popularity of his classes. His ratings were on par with or slightly higher than the average ratings of other sections of the courses he taught. In the Fall 2014 semester, evaluations of his ENG 1101-D377 class revealed a rating of 4.58 in this section, as compared to a rating of 4.49 overall in similar departmental sections. The 15 students who completed the survey (class enrollment: 24) noted that Dr. Ellis treated them with courtesy and respect (80%); that he was available for conferences or discussions (73%); encouraged them to ask questions and replied with meaningful answers 73% of the time; and communicated in a way they understood 80% of the time. His overall teaching was effective 87% of the time--a fine tribute, since Dr. Ellis has displayed high standards for this course, one in which students of varying abilities and experiences with writing must learn to write, read, research and expand their digital skills.

The Student Opinion rating overall for his ENG 3771-D564 section (response rate of 96%; 23/24 students responding) was 4.73, as compared to 4.57 for other sections of this class in the department. Respondents found that he communicated in a way they could

understand (82%), while 91% of the students said he took time to explain materials when they did not understand.

## SERVICE

### Department, College and/or University

Dr. Ellis also provided service to the Department, College and the University. While "getting his feet wet," he attempted to overlap his work in the areas of teaching, service and scholarship. He has tried to determine how best to link his many interests, and contribute his expertise, to benefit department, the college and the wider community

He served the Department through being secretary of the Professional and Technical Writing Program Committee and writing PTW Committee Minutes. He also helped organize recruitment procedures for the Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) major.

He co-created the PTW program's introductory presentation with colleague Dr. Patrick Corbett. This first session was carefully crafted and energetically presented to launch the new major at the Fall 2014 Open House, as well as during subsequent program information meetings. The sessions have had two goals: to inform the campus and community about the new Professional and Technical Writing major; and to attract prospective students. A number of those who attended these first sessions enrolled immediately!

Dr. Ellis also served the college through being the Website Coordinator for the School of Arts and Sciences. He collected website updates from departmental website liaisons, approved them with the Dean's Office, and forwarded them to the Webmaster. He tested the Dean's website for usability and suggested changes to it (See Botchway-website-email.pdf).

He assisted Dean Botchway in the process of deploying new computing resources for students and faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences. As part of that assignment, he wrote a detailed memo describing steps that could be taken to improve the computing facilities in the division, and in particular, in the English department. He explained how such steps would be required if the Professional and Technical Writing major were to develop and expand. He outlined his own relevant prior IT experience, including assignments with the computing infrastructure at the Georgia Institute of Technology, as an undergraduate, as an IT employee, and a faculty member (See ellis-jason-computing-email.pdf).

And he served as a member of the Assessment Committee of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Because of the nature of the advice given Dean Botchway, Dr. Ellis already has had a positive impact on a large number of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty members and students. He plans to continue speaking about the need for digital literacy, the use of social media, and ways in which to improve computing in the Liberal Arts. In the semesters to come, Dr. Ellis's hopes to expand his research and publications in the fields of science fiction, digital and neuro humanities, and 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century American literature and culture. Such activities will enhance his classroom, enlighten and encourage his colleagues to become even more multi-modal and digitally competent, and thereby extend the reputation of the English department.

### SCHOLARLY, CREATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

While teaching and making Service contributions to the department, college and larger community, Dr. Ellis has continued his involvement in a wide range of professional and scholarly activities: researching, writing and editing. He explains in his PARSE, "My research informs my teaching and service interests." During this first year on staff at City Tech, he has written reviews; co-written a book chapter; continued his scholarly blog posts, created a scholarly online resource and video posts, and presented a workshop on uses of social media. He has been writing papers for delivery at conferences. He plans to revise previously written work for peer-reviewed publication.

During the Fall 2014 semester he completed a review of the three-volume set of Political Future Fictions for the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) Review, the oldest professional organization devoted to the research and teaching of science fiction. He co-wrote a book chapter with Georgia Tech colleague Lisa Yaszek on "Science Fiction and the Posthuman," for the forthcoming book, **The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman**. Eds. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini, Cambridge UP, expected 2015.

He is writing a paper entitled, "Media Archeology and Cyberspace: William Gibson's **Neuromancer** as a Print Novel, Video Game, and an Early E-book," for the upcoming annual SFRA conference. This paper derives from research done for and presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> annual City Tech Poster Session on 20 November 2014; his topic then was: Transformations of 'Cyberspace' across Media: Print, Video Game, and Early eBook." (See [ellis-jason-poster-2014.pdf](#) and [ellis-jason-with-poster.jpg](#)).

He has continued to share his scholarly research, and to develop and share his pedagogical research. He posted an extended essay entitled "An Entreaty to Gamergate: Giving ourselves Permission to Change for an Inclusive Video Game Culture" to his personal scholarship blog at [DynamicSubspace.net](#) on 11 February 2015, and on 25 April 2015 added "Neuroscience and Science Fiction Literature. He created a 41 minute video entitled "Emulation Demo of Agrippa: A Book of the Dead with System 7.0.1 and System 7.1," launched on YouTube on 12 April 2015. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, he presented a Social Media workshop on Professionalization and Pedagogy. He plans to add his most recent "Writing the Brain" classroom assignments and rationalizations to an in-process book,



**Best Practices in Writing Assignment Design.** Eds. Melissa Bender and Karma Waltonen.

Dr. Ellis also has found interesting ways in which New York City can enrich his research, and teaching. This year he began to interview a series of writers who have made a mark in the area of science fiction (like Ted Chiang, an international figure and 4-time winner of a Hugo award). He has shared his research and writing in multiple forms on line: on You Tube (<http://www.youtube.com/dynamicsubspace>), and on Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/dynamicsubspace>). He has attracted the attention of technologists (including Bob Stein of The Voyager Company and The Future of the Book); they have suggested potential projects and collaborations, which Dr. Ellis is now considering.

He has just written an essay about recent disturbing developments in video game culture. Visit his nine-year-old research and pedagogy blog, <http://dynamicspace.net/>. As his involvement with life in New York City deepens, Dr. Ellis certainly hopes to widen his "Writing the Brain" curriculum, to prepare our students for workplaces that will require "Brain" mastery. He will continue to collaborate with others in the development of the new PTW major.

### WORKING WITH OTHERS

It appears that Dr. Ellis has positive relations in the department and the division, with staff, faculty and students. He takes pride in collaborating with others and in introducing digital pedagogies. He is interested in knowing his students, as well as in meeting staff and teaching colleagues. He has served on the department's Social Committee, a position that has introduced him to the English department's culture; he has helped the department honor the life events of our colleagues and celebrate departmental milestones.

He has worked with colleagues on expanding the new PTW program; has strategized with the Dean regarding computer installations across the division. In all of his interactions, Dr. Ellis has served eagerly, been of good cheer, and a respectful, optimistic team player, always willing to share his time and talent for the good of the institution.

### EVALUATION

Overall, during 2014-2015 Dr. Ellis' Year I performance has been solid and praiseworthy. His teaching has been recognized as excellent, and his research activities and publications, considering he has been on campus for only two semesters, have been prodigious. His focus on science fiction and social media has made colleagues aware of the need to follow cutting edge digital trends! He has been informed and insightful. His research, writing, publications and focus on PTW course development can positively impact the college far into the future. He has met his first-year goals, and moved beyond. His detailed report to Dean Botchway regarding the need for a "digital upgrade" was exemplary. He has laid groundwork upon which to build continued success.

**The Annual Evaluation Conference Memorandum prepared by**

Evaluator: Dr. Mary NILLES

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Professor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mary E. Nilles*  
*1 June 2015*

**I have been given a copy of this memorandum and have read it.**

Faculty Member: Dr. Jason ELLIS

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Assistant Professor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*J. W. G.*  
*6/9/2015*

The faculty member may submit a statement in response or rebuttal to this memorandum.