

Owning Bits: Intellectual Property in the Information Age

Introduction

Welcome to the Fall 2003 session of one of the offerings of *Tutorial* from Grinnell College's Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. The title of this particular tutorial is *Owning Bits: Intellectual Property in the Information Age*. You can find out more about this particular tutorial from its blurb and about the tutorial itself from an explanatory document.

In short, this semester we'll be working on building your skills in thinking, writing, reading, speaking, and finding sources while studying intellectual property (IP) and considering the effects of information technology on IP.

Because of the *skills/subject* pairing, we will split most class sessions into two parts: for the first thirty or so minutes we'll discuss some issue pertaining to academic skills (e.g., a particular aspect of writing or editing); for the last fifty minutes, we'll discuss some issue pertaining to IP. We'll meet in Saints' Rest.

In an attempt to provide up-to-date information, and to spare a few trees, we are making this as much of a "paperless" course as we can. At the beginning of the semester, I'll provide a few basic handouts in paper form. For the rest of the term, you should look for things on the course web at <http://www.math.grin.edu/~rebelsky/Tutorial/> or <http://www.math.grin.edu/~rebelsky/Courses/Tutorial/2003F/>. You may also want to read the basic instructions for using this course web.

As part of our consideration of intellectual property, you will be sharing the intellectual property you create in this class more widely. In particular, you or I will post much of your work online. This requirement means that it will be accessible to your fellow students and to the broader Web community. If you have difficulty with this requirement, please discuss it with us.

Meets: TuTh 8:00-9:30 in Saints' Rest, 919 Broad Street.

Instructor: Samuel A. Rebelsky, Science 2427. Office hours TBD. Also available by appointment and for walk-ins. Tutee meetings TBD.

Affiliated Librarian: Jen Green. Burling Library. Office hours by appointment.

Grade Components: (each likely to be counted equally)

- Class participation
- Introductory essay
- Bibliography
- Annotated bibliography

- Discussion leader
 - Reflections on discussion
 - Introduction for research paper
 - Research presentation
 - Research paper
 - Editing portfolio
 - Introduction to *Owning Bits, Volume 1*
 - Miscellaneous small assignments
 - Attending convocation
 - Your one best work counts double
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Official Blurb

I'll admit that I wrote this blurb fairly quickly when I realized I'd missed the deadline for writing tutorial blurbs by about a week. Nonetheless, it reflects my general perspective on this course.

Computers and the Internet have changed the environment for various forms of intellectual property, including patents, copyright, and trademark. Some of the attempts to stem abuse of copyrighted materials have also led to questionable limitations on fair use. Similarly, patent law has been expanded to incorporate algorithms and business practices, areas traditionally deemed unpatentable. In addition, while trademarks are limited to particular markets, there is a much more limited range of domain names, leading to unexpected conflicts. In this tutorial, we will explore these and other changes wrought by the new wired environment on notions of intellectual property. We will investigate a variety of topics, focusing primarily on current cases and issues.

About the Tutorial

The Tutorial serves as a linchpin of your Grinnell education. While there are many purposes to the Tutorial, they all relate to a simple purpose: *The Tutorial starts you on your path as lifelong learner*. To be a successful learner and thinker, you must develop a number of requisite skills. These include:

- the ability to *read critically* and *analyze* what you have read;
- the ability to *formulate useful and interesting questions*, based on ideas you encounter;
- the ability to *develop coherent and compelling arguments*, in both written and oral form;
- the ability to *find and identify appropriate evidence* when conducting research and developing arguments;
- an understanding of the purpose and components of a successful *liberal arts education*; and
- an understanding of *intellectual property* and its effect on your academic endeavors.

The advent of large-scale hypertext systems, such as the World-Wide Web, have not significantly changed the needs for such skills. However, the applications of these skills have expanded. For example, some claim that modern thinkers now need to be able to develop arguments not only in “linear” written form and oral form, but also in new hypertextual forms. Similarly, you need to be able to analyze hypertexts.

The Tutorial also has a second important purpose: The Tutorial creates the relationship between students and their first advisor. While we expect that you will form many close relationships with your faculty, Grinnell feels that it is particularly important that you form such a relationship as early as possible.

The Tutorial, like many classes at Grinnell, also gives you the opportunity to study a topic in depth with a small cohort. In this tutorial, we will emphasize the topic by permitting you to choose subtopics and lead portions of the course on those subtopics.

At A Glance

This is an abbreviated course syllabus. Like everything else in this course, it is likely to change.

Weeks: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, break, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

Week 0: Preparation	
	<p>(01) Sunday, 24 August 2003 About This Tutorial Introductions. What is tutorial? What is IP? The format of our tutorial: meeting format, overall structure, etc. Planning for the next few days. About course planning. <i>Assignments: Miscellaneous Assignment One: Orientation Sessions (due Tuesday). Miscellaneous Assignment Two: Course Planning (due Tuesday). Reading Assignment One: About College Work (due Thursday). Writing Assignment One: Web Links and IP (due Thursday).</i></p>
<p>(02) Tuesday, 26 August 2003 Planning Your Schedule <i>Due: Miscellaneous Homework 1: Orientation. Miscellaneous Homework 2: Course Planning.</i></p>	<p>(03) Thursday, 28 August 2003 Why Write? <i>Due: Writing Assignment 1</i></p>
Week 1: IP Basics	
<p>(04) Tuesday, 2 September 2003 Copyright Causes of Bad Writing. Editing Exercise. Copyright Background: Purposes, Protections. Fair Use: An Exception to Copyright. Copyright Issues in the Internet Age. <i>Due: Reading Assignment 2: Williams 1. Assignments: Miscellaneous Assignment 3: Course Syllabi (due Thursday). Reading Assignment 3: Williams 2 (Clarity) (due Tuesday).</i></p>	<p>(05) Thursday, 4 September 2003 Patent Your research topics. Time management 101. Basics of U.S. Patent Law. Patents in the Information Age. <i>Assignments: Misc. Assignment 4: Time Logs (due Thursday, 18 September 2003). Misc. Assignment 5: Choose a Topic (due Thursday, 11 September 2003). Due: Writing Assignment 2: Rewrites.</i></p>
Week 2: Grounding ideas	
<p>(06) Tuesday, 9 September 2003 The Power of Sources <i>Style, Chapter 2: Clarity. Style Exercise 2: Clarity. Lessons from Convocation. Why use sources? Academic honesty basics.</i> <i>Assignments: Reading Assignment 4: Ethical Use of Sources. Reading Assignment 5: Williams Chapter 3.</i></p>	<p>(07) Thursday, 11 September 2003 Topic Selection Alumni Advice: Dealing with Stress. Topic Selection. Convocation Reflections. Finding Sources, Part I. <i>Assignments: Reading Homework 6: Information Literacy Modules. Miscellaneous Homework 6: Bibliography. Due: Miscellaneous Homework 5: Topic Selection.</i></p>
Week 3: Other IP Issues	
<p>(08) Tuesday, 16 September 2003 Finding Sources (1) <i>Style: Coherence. About Convocation. Finding Sources. Types of Sources. Using Sources.</i> <i>Assignments: Reading Assignment 7: Style, Chapter 4, Emphasis. Miscellaneous Assignment 7: Web Journal or Log.</i></p>	<p>(09) Thursday, 18 September 2003 Trademark and Trade Secret Discussion of time logs. Planning for coming weeks. Trademark Basics. Trademark and the Information Age. <i>Due: Miscellaneous Assignment 6: Bibliography. Assignments: Writing Assignment 3: Introduction. Miscellaneous Assignment 8: Papers for Discussion.</i></p>
Week 4: Miscellaneous	
<p>(10) Tuesday, 23 September 2003 Finding Sources (2) What makes a source authoritative? Useful library resources. Exercise: DVD Editing.</p>	<p>(11) Thursday, 25 September 2003 Preparation for Discussion <i>Assignments: Reading Assignment 8: Style, Chapters 4 and 5. Writing Assignment 4: Annotated Bibliography. Writing Assignment 5: Discussion Assessment. Due: Writing Assignment 3: Introduction. Miscellaneous Assignment 8: Papers for Discussion.</i></p>

Week 5: Student-Led Topical Discussions (1)	
(12) Tuesday, 30 September 2003 Discussion (Eric and Joe)	(13) Thursday, 2 October 2003 Discussion (Sarah and Jesse)
Week 6: Student-Led Topical Discussions (2)	
(14) Tuesday, 7 October 2003 Discussion (Alex and William)	(15) Thursday, 9 October 2003 Discussion (Eryn and Norman) <i>Due:</i> Writing Assignment 4: Annotated Bibliography.
Week 7: Student-Led Topical Discussions (3)	
(16) Tuesday, 14 October 2003 Discussion (Dan and Elizabeth)	(17) Thursday, 16 October 2003 Discussion (Michael and Evan)
Fall Break	
Week 8: Oral Skills	
(18) Tuesday, 28 October 2003 Reflections on Discussions <i>Due:</i> Writing Assignment 5: Discussion Self-Assessment. <i>Assignments:</i> Writing Assignment 6: Research Papers.	(19) Thursday, 30 October 2003 Presenting Papers The Discussion Essays. Presenting Work. Fun Detour: Pirates. <i>Assignments:</i> Reading Assignment 9: Liberal Education. Miscellaneous Assignment 9: The Diebold Case.
Week 9: Editing	
(20) Tuesday, 4 November 2003 Liberal Education <i>Due:</i> Draft of Writing Assignment 5: Research Paper.	(21) Thursday, 6 November 2003 Preregistration
Week 10: Paper Presentations (1)	
(22) Tuesday, 11 November 2003 Presentations (Joe, Jesse, and Dan)	(23) Thursday, 13 November 2003 Presentations (Sarah, Michael, and William)
Week 11: Paper Presentations (2)	
(24) Tuesday, 18 November 2003 Presentations (Elizabeth, Evan, and Norman)	(25) Thursday, 20 November 2003 Presentations (Eric, Eryn and Alex)
Week 12: Writing Introductions	
(26) Tuesday, 25 November 2003 Writing Introductions <i>Due:</i> Writing Assignment 6: Research Paper	
Week 13: Planning <i>Owning Bits</i>, Vol 1	
(27) Tuesday, 2 December 2003 Organizing the Papers	(28) Thursday, 4 December 2003 Introductions <i>Due:</i> Draft of Introduction to <i>Owning Bits</i> , Vol. 1.
Week 14: Wrapup	
(29) Tuesday, 9 December 2003 Evaluation	(30) Thursday, 11 December 2003 Debriefing <i>Due:</i> Writing Assignment 8: Introduction to <i>Owning Bits</i> , Vol. 1. Writing Assignment 9: Editing Portfolio.

Readings

The books on this reading list will be supplemented by a number of shorter readings that we will select. You will note that there are very few texts listed here (at least at first). I have chosen to limit the number of required texts so that I may challenge you to find some for areas of your own interest.

Intellectual Property

Reference Material

Section 17 of the U.S. Code (Copyright).

The basics of copyright law in way too many pages. I do not expect you to read the whole copyright code. However, you should skim it regularly.

Section 35 of the U.S. Code (Patent)

The basics of patent law in way too many pages. I do not expect you to read the whole patent code. However, you should skim it regularly.

Writing, Reading, and More

Required

Williams, Joseph (1995). *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

This is one of the texts that you will use to ground your learning of academic skills. You should turn to it to hone your writing.

Williams, Joseph and McEnerney, Lawrence (1995). *Writing in College: A Short Guide to College Writing*. Chicago, IL: The Humanities Collegiate Division of The College of The University of Chicago. Online resource at

http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/college_writing/ (visited 24 August 2003; reportedly last modified September 1998; last modified 1 August 1999).

This is where you'll start your consideration of writing. It's a relatively short discourse on what it means to write for at the college level, with particular attention paid to thesis statements and arguments.

Recommended

Fulwiler, Toby and Hayakawa, Alan R. (1998). *The College Writer's Reference*. Prentice Hall.

For those of you who need to work on your fundamental writing skills (not on fine tuning, but on things like run-on sentences), this is a good reference. It is also the College's general reference for students in tutorial. This text is *recommended* and not required. However, when I grade your papers I will often refer to the sections of this text.

Navigating the Class

How to Use the Course Web

For a number of reasons, I have chosen to make many of the handouts for this course available only in electronic format on the World Wide Web. I will not go over basic use of the Web, since you should know about it from other courses. You should make sure to ask me if you have any questions about using the World Wide Web.

The course web can be found at

<http://www.cs.grinnell.edu/~rebelsky/Courses/Tutorial/2003F/> You may want to bookmark that page.

A number of important pieces of information are in the course web, including assignments, readings, requirements, syllabus, and office hours. I assume that if I put information on the Web, you will (eventually) read it.

- At the bare minimum, you should read all the pieces of basic information about the course. Of particular interest is the course at a glance page, which lists all the daily topics.
- I prepare a rough outline for each class. Most students find these useful, and you should feel free to refer to them before, during, and after class.
- It's worth regularly checking the course at a glance.

At the top and bottom of every page are a series of links to important components of the course web. They are broken into three sections: (1) common internal links, (2) groups of documents, and (3) useful external links.

Primary Internal Links

- Current. The outline of the current or next class. You may need to reload the page to get the appropriate version.
- Glance. An abbreviated version of the syllabus.
- Honesty. A short discourse on academic honesty, added to the common links so that you'll make sure to check it.
- Instructions. This set of instructions.
- Links. A collection of links that you might find useful. Some of these are replicated at the top and bottom of each page.
- News. The course news, taken from the outlines.
- Search. A simple search facility for the course web.
- Syllabus. The course syllabus.

Groupings

- Handouts. The primary handouts for the class (syllabus, these instructions, etc.).
 - Homework. A list of the assignments for the class, accompanied by their due dates
 - Labs. Laboratory assignments.
 - Outlines. The outlines of classes that have been held. You can sometimes access other outlines through the course at a glance.
 - Readings. Readings generated for this course.
 - Reference. Various reference materials for the course.
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On Teaching, Learning, and Grading

- Introduction
- My Role
- Grading
- Your Role
- Lecturing
- Summary

Introduction

I like to begin each course with a meta-commentary on teaching and learning. Why? Because I care about the learning process, because I seem to have a different teaching style and personality than some students expect, and because I want you to think not just about *what* you are learning, but also *how* you are learning.

From my perspective, you are here to learn and I am here to support that learning. What will you be learning? The subject matter of the course, certainly. However, I expect that (or hope that) you will also be discovering new ways to think and learn or sharpening existing skills. For example, in most of my courses I hope that you will develop your collaboration skills and your “think on your feet” skills. In terms of subject matter, I tend to care more about the processes and concepts that you learn than about the “basic facts”.

Learning is an interactive process. You learn by asking, discussing, and answering questions, by playing with ideas and by working with others. I know from experience that few topics can be learned passively: you need to experiment with ideas (in your head, on paper, in discussion) in order to fully grasp these ideas.

My Role

How do I try to support this learning? In a number of ways.

I *assign readings* to give you a basis for understanding the subject matter. Sometimes these readings will be from the textbook, sometimes I will distribute appropriate supplements.

I *lecture, lead discussions, and conduct recitations* on the topics of the course. Sometimes these will be based on readings and assignments, sometimes they will vary significantly from your readings. Why? Because I feel it wastes your time and mine to simply reiterate the readings. If you let me know that you're confused about a reading, I will spend time going over that reading (either in person or in class).

To stimulate discussion and thinking, I regularly *call on students* in class. I know that not all of you are comfortable answering questions publicly, but I strongly believe that you need to try. Please feel free to say "I'm not sure" when I call on you. At times, I'll step through the class, asking each student in turn. At others, I'll call on you individually. I tend to call more on students I interact with regularly.

I *assign work* because I find that most people learn by grounding concepts in particular exercises that allow them to better explore the details and implications of those concepts. I expect you to turn in work on the day it is due and will impose severe penalties on late assignments (including refusing to accept some late assignments).

Some of my assignments may involve *public presentation* of your work. Sometimes, the best way to learn a topic is to have to discuss it or present it to someone else. In addition, I've found that many students need some work on their presentation skills. Most often, presentations will be of papers that you've read.

In general, I expect you to spend about ten hours per week on this class outside of class time. If you find that you are spending more than that, let me know and I'll try to reduce the workload.

I *grade assignments* to help you identify some areas for improvement. Note that I believe that you learn more from doing an assignment than from receiving a grade on that assignment. This means that you may not receive a grade or comments on all your assignments. I will tell you when an assignment won't be graded, but not until after you hand it in. I will do my best to be prompt about returning grades on assignments. At times, I will use a grader to help speed the process.

I *build course webs* to organize my thoughts, to give you a resource for learning, and to help those of you who need to work on your note-taking skills. I do my best to make my notes for each lecture available on the Web, in outline format. In general, these notes will be available approximately five minutes before class. Warning: these are rough notes of what I expect to talk about; the actual class may not follow the notes. I will also attempt to update the notes after each class.

I *make myself available* to discuss problems and questions because I know that some of you will need personal attention. In general, if I'm in my office you should feel free to stop in. Most of the time, I'll be willing to help. Once in a while, I'll be working on a project and will ask you to come back later. Students always have first priority during office hours. You should also feel free to send me electronic mail, which I read regularly, and to call me.

At times, I *survey* my students to better understand how the class is going. Because I do research on the effects of computers on learning, I sometimes give surveys to gather data.

Grading

At the same time that you learn and I try to help you learn, Grinnell and the larger community expect me to assign a grade to your work in the class. I base grades on a number of components, but primarily on *assignments, examinations, and involvement in classroom discussions*.

Because I understand that not everyone gets everything right the first time, I will occasionally allow you to *redo* an assignment that you did poorly on.

I will admit to a fairly strict grading scale. Grinnell notes that A and A- represent exceptional work. To me, “exceptional” means going beyond solid, acceptable, correct work. Exceptional work entails doing more than is assigned or doing what is assigned particularly elegantly. Work limited to mastery of the core materials is B-level work.

Your Role

How should you participate as a member of my class? (Or, how do you do well in my class?) By being an active participant in your own learning. In part, this means doing all the work for the class. It also means a number of other things.

Come talk to me when you have questions or comments about subject matter, work load, or how the course is going in general. I may also set up an anonymous comment page for those who are uncomfortable talking to me directly.

Do the readings in advance of each class period and come prepared with a list of things that you don’t understand. I will try to spend time at the beginning of each class session answering these questions or will restructure the lecture to accommodate them.

Ask and answer questions and make comments during class periods. I consider active participation during class a particularly important part of the learning process.

Begin your assignments early. Students who begin assignments early have more opportunities to ask for help, to make sure that the assignment gets completed, and to sleep at night. Such students also do better in general.

Lecturing

I seem to have a different “lecturing” style than some students expect. As I mentioned earlier, I don’t think it is the purpose of lecture to reiterate the readings. I do, however, think lecture and readings can provide alternate perspectives on the subject matter. At times, I will also discuss issues not covered in any readings.

I see no point in going on with a lecture or example if many students don’t understand what’s going on. You are the first line of defense: stop me when you are confused. In addition, I will occasionally stop the class and ask for a show of hands to see who is confused. Don’t be embarrassed to raise your hand; if you are confused, it is likely that someone else is also confused. I realize that this show of hands leads to some “pressure for understanding”. However, you won’t get much out of a class if you’re confused (and therefore just copying down what I’m writing without thinking about it).

I deem it important for students to be active participants in lecture. This means that I will often ask you to help develop algorithms, solve problems, and even critique each other's answers. If I call on you and you're not sure of an answer, feel free to say "I don't know" or to venture a guess. I consider it very important for all of us to see the problem solving process, warts and all. Note that I often generate examples of discussion "on the fly" so that we can all be involved in the problem solving or development process.

Summary

As the prior discussion suggests, I expect a great deal from my students. I also use many different strategies to get the best out of you. Feel free to discuss any of this with me (anything from concerns about this perspective to suggestions on improving teaching and learning).

Academic Honesty

Part of the academic endeavor is a notion that academics (students, faculty, researchers, staff) must follow high standards of honesty in their academic work. One component of academic honesty is that academics must clearly indicate which work (ideas, writing, etc.) is theirs and which belongs to others.

Grinnell's student handbook includes the following statement:

The college expects Grinnell students to demonstrate a high code of personal honor in all their relationships. Further, the college seeks to protect the integrity of the operations in which grades are involved: the granting of degrees, the conferring of honors and privileges, and the certification and transfer of credits to other institutions. Accordingly, students who are dishonest in the preparation of assignments or in examinations may incur the penalty of probation, immediate failure in the course, suspension, or dismissal from the college.

Dishonesty in academic work often involves plagiarism. A student is expected to acknowledge explicitly any expressions, ideas, or observations that are not his or her own. In submitting a report, paper, examination, homework assignment, or computer program, he or she is stating that the form and content of the paper, report, examination, homework assignment, or computer program represents his or her own work, except where clear and specific reference is made to other sources. Even when there may be no conscious effort to deceive, failure to make appropriate acknowledgment may constitute plagiarism. Therefore, students should comply with [appropriate requirements for acknowledging sources]. (Grinnell College 2000-2001 Student Handbook, p. 51)

However, there is much more to academic honesty than just making sure to cite work you've used. In particular, you are expected to provide a true and accurate representation of your work in experimental endeavors (e.g., it is academically dishonest to invent or modify experimental results). It is also academically dishonest to aid another in an academically dishonest act (e.g., to provide aid on a no-aid exam, to write a paper for another student).

There are also more reasons to care about academic honesty than simply the "integrity of operations". First, academic advancement requires that a trail of ideas be available so that successes and failures can be traced backward. Second, your own personal integrity requires that you be academically honest.

In Fall 2000, I had my first serious encounters with academic dishonesty at Grinnell, so I'm now trying to be extra-careful in spelling out what I expect from my students. What follows are some general expectations.

I expect you to follow the highest principles of academic honesty. Among other things, this means that any work you turn in should be your own or should have the work of others clearly documented. However, when you explicitly work as part of a group or team, you need not identify the work of each individual (unless I specify otherwise).

You should never "give away" answers to homework assignments or examinations. You may, however, work together in developing answers to most homework assignments. Except as specified on individual assignments, each student should develop his or her own final version of the assignment. On written assignments, each student should write up an individual version of the assignment and cite the discussion. On non-group programming assignments, each student should do his or her own programming, although students may help each other with design and debugging.

If you have a question as to whether a particular action may violate academic standards, please discuss it with me (preferably before you undertake that action).

Collaborative Work

Most of my teaching involves *collaborative work*. I believe (and have found) that students learn better when they can consult with each other. There are few better ways to learn something than to explain that thing to someone else.

In each assignment I give, I do my best to make it clear whether the assignment is intended to be primarily collaborative or primarily individual.

Citing Web Pages

The advances of the Internet and the World Wide Web have led to challenges in citation. Some seem to believe that it is acceptable for a citation to consist of a URL. However, a citation should provide much more information. Consider what a typical citation to the printed literature contains: Author, Date, Publisher, Title of Article, Publisher, etc. Your Web citations should contain at least as much detail. That is, you must include not just the URL, but also the author of the page (using "Anonymous" or an institutional author, if necessary), the title of the page, the publisher (the site), and the date.

The date is particularly important. Unlike printed sources, which have new editions when they change, electronic resources often change unexpectedly. By including the date the page was accessed and modified, you at least provide some indication of when the ideas you were using were available at the specified location.

Here is a sample citation for this page, using one standard form of citations.

Rebelsky, Samuel (2001). Academic Honesty. Grinnell College Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. Available at <http://www.cs.grinnell.edu/~rebelsky/Courses/Tutorial/2003F/Handouts/academic-honesty.html> (Last modified 19 January 2001; Visited 20 January 2001).

Disabilities

I encourage those of you with disabilities, particularly hidden disabilities such as learning disabilities, to come see me about the accommodations that I can make to make your learning easier. If you have not already done so, you should also discuss your disability with academic advising. If you think you may have an undocumented learning disability, please speak to me and to academic advising.

In my experience, some learning difficulties can make computer science more difficult, particularly because computers emphasize small details. I also know that many of my favorite and best students have some learning disability and have certainly succeeded. We'll all do better if you talk to me about disabilities early. I will make the accommodations that seem to be appropriate.

Note that I generally feel that the accommodations that we are asked to make for those with learning disabilities are often appropriate for all students. Hence, I rarely give timed exams and I typically allow students to use computers during exams.

As you may note from the bottom of my Web pages, I do my best to have my Web pages meet the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative Guidelines. If you notice places in which I fail, please let me know.

Discussion Procedures

At Grinnell (and elsewhere), you will regularly engage in serious discussions and arguments about a number of topics. You will find that some discussions are both successful and enjoyable while others are painful and irritating. What makes a discussion good or useful?

- Better discussions often focus on a *central claim* or idea.
- Better discussions demonstrate a *continuity* of ideas: each comment or claim is linked, explicitly or implicitly, to prior comments and claims.
- Better discussions rely on *evidence* (most typically, from the readings).

For now, we will emphasize continuity. That is, each statement you make should *connect* to a prior statement or statements. Here are some of the connections you might make. When we first discuss, I'd like you to explicitly state what kind of connection you're making (and I'll try to put a list on the board).

- You can stake a *claim*. Typically, we will begin our discussions with a single claim. Once a claim has been made, you should not stake another claim until we have exhausted the first claim.
- You can provide further *evidence* or examples to support or refute a claim.
- You can suggest or question the *warrant* that relates evidence to a claim.
- You can raise an *objection* to the claim.
 - This objection could be a possible flaw in the claim.
 - This objection could be a possible counter-claim.
- You can *refine* or *correct* the claim.
- You can *distinguish* between parts of a claim, often in conjunction with other connections.
 - For example, you might say something like "Jack has claimed that X, which is really a combination of Y and Z. While Jack is certainly correct in claiming Y, Jane has already

disproven Z”.

- You can *summarize* the discussion up to the present point.
 - You can *relate* two or more earlier statements.
 - You can comment on the *structure* or *procedures* of the discussion. For example, “Joe’s last comment seems to be bringing us further away from Jane’s and Jack’s earlier points”.
 - You might request clarification of the prior statement or related issue.
 - Could you rephrase that claim?
 - Are you really saying ___?
 - What warrant connects that evidence to the claim?
 - What evidence do you have for that claim?
-

Reading

This introduction was written after a wonderful lecture by Sandy Goldberg on talking to students about reading. Note that Sandy often assigns better writers than I do, so not everything may apply in all readings.

How should you read the various pieces of writing for class? Carefully, accurately, repeatedly, and thoughtfully.

You should read each piece of writing *carefully*. Most authors have placed considerable effort and care into their writing, precisely structuring their arguments. You owe it to yourself and to the author to make sure that you understand the argument.

You should read each piece of writing *accurately*. Strive to understand what the author intends at each place. Note that most authors of argumentative texts will use a number of forms to support their arguments. These include

- the *claims* that they intend to prove;
- the *evidence* that they intend to use to support those claims;
- possible *objections* to their claims (the best arguments acknowledge such objections and attempt to refute them);
- *responses* to those objections;
- a *summary* of the current argument (longer arguments require regular summaries);
- *conclusions* that can be drawn from the evidence.

I expect that you will eventually be able to classify each part of any writing I assign. That is, I may choose a section of the writing (e.g., a sentence or paragraph) and ask you whether it is a claim, evidence, objection, response, summary, or conclusion. You should also understand the relationship of that piece of text to the larger argument.

When possible, you should read each piece of writing *repeatedly*. Often, it is not possible to understand a serious piece of writing on the first (or second or third) reading. Through repeated readings, you familiarize yourself with the author’s perspective, the structure of his or her argument, and the ideas he or she raises.

Finally, you should read each piece of work *thoughtfully*. Once you begin to understand a piece, you should begin to consider its implications. As you read, you are likely to develop questions.

More Than You Wanted To Know About Writing

Writing

How can you successfully write papers for this tutorial and elsewhere? This is a somewhat harder question than the related question about reading. Why is it harder? You are likely to do a variety of kinds of writing, for a variety of different audiences. There is also some fairly strong evidence that different writers successfully apply a variety of techniques.

Nonetheless, there are some basic techniques that hold no matter what you are writing and who you are writing for. In particular, you should make sure that you understand your topic and your audience, that you have a clear thesis, and that you write early, often, and with support.

You cannot successfully write about a topic unless you know that topic well. It is also inappropriate to make strong claims about a field in which you have little background. Make sure that you've done both main and background readings, and that you've understood them well. For many topics, you will also need to do some independent research to find out what others have said, or to find more information to support your points.

You cannot write to an audience unless you understand that audience. Different papers have different audiences. What you'd write to convince an expert in the field is different than what you'd write to convince a novice (the main thrust of the argument might be similar, but the particular evidence and possible objections you raise are likely to be quite different). Make sure that you've thought about your audience, what they know, and what they don't know.

You cannot write about most topics unless there is a core thesis to what you are writing. A thesis is not "I am writing about X". A thesis is a claim that you make, a claim that you will need to support through proper argument in your paper. A thesis also provides an entry to your paper. If your thesis statement is weak or uninteresting, you stand little chance of attracting and convincing readers.

You cannot write well the first time you write. Evidence shows that few writers can create beautiful and convincing prose on the first try. (Yes, some can. Such people are rare.) You should expect to need to rewrite everything at least once, and often many times. At least one rewrite is likely to be significant: You will need to change the structure of your argument, discard some prose, and introduce new prose. It can be difficult to throw away things you write, but there is little benefit to keeping extra writing that doesn't support your thesis. At times, I'll do my best to show you pieces of my writing and how they changed as I revised them.

You cannot write well by yourself. By allowing others to read and critique your writings, you give yourself the opportunity to learn how someone else interprets and misinterprets what you've written. Experience also shows that others are often better at finding mistakes, both large and small. Build a support group of friends with whom you are comfortable sharing your writings and who can give you useful feedback on those writings. I hope that your tutorial colleagues will provide some members of that group.

You cannot write well unless you revise, and you cannot revise unless you start writing early. Successful revision includes giving yourself some time away from the paper, to both reflect on the topic and to let yourself “forget” a little bit of the paper. If you write early, you also give yourself time to show your paper to others. To encourage early writing, I may require rough drafts before papers are due.

On the Grading of Writing

As you progress through Grinnell, you will find that different faculty members have different perspectives on how to grade writing and what makes a particular essay deserve a particular grade. This short document is my attempt to describe my own perspective and to prepare you for the comments and grades you will soon receive.

When I grade your essays, I tend to look for three things: syntax, style, and substance. An ideal essay has correct syntax, elegant style, and significant substance. Normal essays tend to be adequate in all three categories. Weak essays fail to satisfy me in at least one category.

When I evaluate your *syntax*, I consider how well you adhere to the conventions and customs of the English language. While English is fairly malleable, there are limitations to this malleability. By staying close to conventions, you make your writing clearer and easier for your readers.

When I evaluate your *style*, I consider how well your essay flows. I tend to emphasize the structure of your argument and the transitions you make between parts of your essay. I also do my best to consider whether you have addressed your audience appropriately. As the semester progresses, I will also look for the various stylistic components that Williams discusses in *Style*.

Of course, a correct, elegant essay is nothing without some underlying *substance*. That is, I want to see an appropriate and interesting thesis, some good ideas, careful analysis of the texts we’ve read, and even a convincing argument. When I evaluate your substance, I often consider how well you’ve met the requirements of the assignment (if the assignment had particular requirements).

To help me evaluate your essays consistently, I will often rely on a *rubric*: a check-list of points to evaluate. The rubric helps me make sure that I have considered all of the appropriate points in your essay. Of course, I do not treat rubrics as limiting. I feel free to add other points even if they are not covered by the rubric at hand.

I prefer to make my comments electronically. If you email me documents, I am likely to insert them within the document. I will give you printed comments and email you a Web page containing my comments.

Like most of the faculty at Grinnell, I am a fairly strict grader. To earn an A on an essay, you must typically excel in at least one of the latter two categories. That is, you must either have excellent ideas and express them relatively well, or have particularly eloquent prose and reasonably good ideas. In all cases, your grammar must be correct. Particularly weak grammar, ideas, or style may give you a lower grade than you or I would like.

SamR's Writing Bugaboos

Here are a few commonly-misused and commonly-abused phrases and writing strategies that I expect you to avoid. Not all are incorrect, but all bother me in some way. Hence, it behooves you to avoid them in any writing you show to me.

I've listed these "bugaboos" alphabetically, since I didn't want to provide any implicit order-of-precedence.

couple *used as an adjective*

"Couple" is a noun (meaning two or a few) or a verb (meaning join). Please don't use it as an adjective. That is, don't write "a couple mistakes". Rather, write "a few mistakes" (preferred) or "a couple of mistakes".

decimate

This is used too often as a synonym for destroy. However, it means something more, particularly because of its historical background. The origin of the term has to do with an ancient military practice (a Roman practice, I believe) of lining up the people in a village and killing every tenth person (or man), thereby demoralizing the populace. Use it only when you mean "remove one in ten" or "harm to such a level that it demoralizes that which is harmed".

facilitate

An overused word, that doesn't say much more than "makes it easier for X to do Y". Tends to lead to weak, inactive sentences.

data is

"Data" is a plural noun (the plural of "datum"). Hence, you should write "data are".

HTML programming

You do not program in HTML. HTML is a *markup* language, not a programming language. Markup languages talk about appearance or roles. Programming languages (typically) talk about actions. You might "write HTML". You might "mark-up a page with HTML". You do not "program HTML">

media is

"Media" is a plural noun (the plural of "medium"). Hence, you should write "media are".

real

Do not use "real" to mean "very", as in "that's a real cute kid you have".

user

I dislike this word for a number of reasons. One is that it is often too vague. We speak of "users" of particular kinds of software. However, at least on the Web, it may be more appropriate to speak of "readers" and "authors". While "users" may be appropriate for some forms of software (after all, people do *use* software), you might consider making it clearer what use people are making of that software.

A second reason that I dislike this word is that it is often used condescendingly, often leading to the term "lusers".

Yes, there are others.

utilize

"Use", dressed up, but with no additional meaning.

Multiple Adjectives

You should be careful when using multiple adjectives to modify a noun, since there are fairly strict rules about meaning (and misuse of the rules can lead to you saying something other than what you mean).

There are three basic forms for two-adjective modifiers,

- **adjective₁ adjective₂ noun** (no extra punctuation). In this case, the second adjective modifies the noun (creating a noun phrase), and the first adjective modifies the noun phrase. For example, a “red oak tree” is an oak tree that is red. A “cool mathematics class” is a mathematics class that happens to be cool. A “happy wild child” is a wild child who is also happy.
- **adjective₁, adjective₂ noun** (adjectives separated by commas). In this case, both adjectives independently modify the noun. For example, a “red, oak tree” is a tree that is red and a tree that is an oak. (Okay, that wasn’t the best example.) Similarly, a “cool, mathematics class” is a class that is cool, and a class that is in math. A “happy, wild child” is a child who is both happy and wild.
- **adjective₁-adjective₂ noun** (hyphenated adjectives). In this case, the first adjective (okay, it’s really acting as an adverb) modifies the second adjective, and the adjectival phrase modifies the noun. For example, a “red-oak tree” is a tree belonging to the species “red oak” and a “cool-mathematics class” is a class in a subdiscipline of mathematics known as “cool mathematics”.

Obviously, for some cases, standards or custom allow you to violate these rules. For example, in “Supreme Court justice”, it is clear that “Supreme Court” is intended as a logical whole, even though it is not hyphenated and probably shouldn’t be. (Note, however, that “supreme court justice” refers to the most supreme of the court justices.) In other cases, the context makes the meaning obvious. However, in almost every case, you should punctuate your adjectives appropriately.

(The more obnoxious among you may be wondering why I didn’t hyphenate “incorrectly hyphenated”, since the third rule seems to imply that I should do so. However, “incorrectly” is an adverb, not an adjective (what is an “incorrectly version?”), so the association of adverb to adjective is clear.

Some Formatting Bugaboos

As you will soon realize, I also care a lot about formatting, particularly formatting in HTML. Here are a few simple guidelines.

paragraphs

Use `<P>` and `</P>` tags to indicate paragraphs. Don’t use `
` with some non-breaking spaces.

underlining

Don’t (except for links, which the browser should do automatically). Underlining has its roots in typewritten text, in which writers did not have different weights and styles available. If you want to underline, use italics, boldface, or perhaps a different font color (depending on intent). In addition, underlining on the Web typically means “this is a link”, so you should not use it for other purposes.

I prefer to see syntactically correct HTML, even if I don’t always write it. If you’re not sure whether or not your HTML is syntactically correct, run it through the verifier at <http://validator.w3.org>. (Unfortunately, this page is not correct because of some difficulty my page generator has with description lists.)