

Contributers



ENC 1101

Fall 2025

Writing Against the Grain



From the Editor

This zine grew out of ENC 1101, a first-year composition course at the University of Central Florida. Students worked in groups to respond to essays from *Bad Ideas About Writing*, an open-access collection that challenges common misconceptions about how writing works.

The title, *Writing Against the Grain*, was coined by [REDACTED] and chosen through a class vote. It speaks to how there is no single correct way to write. The prescriptive rules many of us absorbed in school often do more harm than good. Writing against the grain means resisting those myths, and that stance shapes everything I do in the classroom.

I wanted this to be a zine because the form asks something different of us than purely digital work does. Students learned about DIY culture and zine history, compiled their writing, and assembled the final product themselves. Even when a zine is born digital, it ends up in your hands. That matters. It can be passed along, left somewhere, and/or given to someone. What you are holding is the work these students did throughout this semester.

ENC 1101: Composition I

Section 0101

Fall 2025



Student Introduction

So, you're probably wondering about how I got here... Hello, I'm a freshman. I survived ENC1011. You will learn that Professor Ritchey is old and that he is a very good teacher. On the very first millisecond, he started geeking out about an online notebook called Obsidian and made us install it. I think this is when we all decided we were in for a wild ride. We also told Professor Ritchey about "6-7" and how 6 or 7 is the best number.

First, we learned about multimodality and Professor Ritchey showed us about pipes and how smoking is good and multimodal. We also talked about cake, and now I'm hungry, so I'm starting a new paragraph. [**Editorial Note:** I, Professor Ritchey, a non-smoker, did not say smoking is cool. I demonstrated multimodality using René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* as an example.]

Professor Ritchey also started a conspiracy among us that Labubus look like Willem Defoe, which was a canon event for the classroom epic. Then, we talked about Anne Lamott's "Shitty First Drafts" and how being a 'failure' in writing doesn't make you a failure in life because what we understand to be good or bad writing is tremendously flawed. We then talked about rhetoric. Rhetoric is basically when you use an unconscious meaning of something to make audiences feel that meaning unconsciously. We spent a lot of time about how language is something that we already know how to do well and that there is no such thing as an "Official English."

After this, Professor Ritchey nearly got his finger cut off by a window, which probably sucked. Later, he would show us one of his favorite bands to demonstrate performance rhetoric. They fell off forty years ago and some of us think it was made for edgy teenagers. There was a focus on how they remixed other songs... sometimes illegally. He showed us how they burned a lot of money as a symbolic act, too. I am going to daydream about having that much money now. Bye, chat.

But then, we were in for a struggle, because we needed to make MA1. Around this time, Ritchey showed us a bad essay about Irish traditional music sessions that was written by AI to demonstrate why we shouldn't use generative AI to write our essays. Then, we learned about discourse communities. In discourse communities, people talk about stuff that interests them. Then, I had to write about how stuff from my discourse community uses rhetoric and multimodality and how it affected the socio-economic state of the world because of MA2. This is where I am now. But I want to play Roblox, so goodbye.

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“We can’t get away from rhetoric, but we can choose the kind of rhetoric we use” (Roberts-Miller 11).

This quote perfectly sums up the adaptability of rhetoric. Rhetoric is not some weapon against truth that is used to constantly deceive the masses by eloquent speakers, but rather a tool for relating our statements to the larger world, which can saturate our words with further meaning by provoking images of artifacts correlated to them.

When I was in elementary school, people often declared politicians to be “liars” and “snakes” for the way they spoke. Because of this, they thought rhetoric to be a tool to be used for evil, rather than a tool which is suited to fit the desires of the user. Even when these politicians had good ideas, they still thought poorly of them because of their rhetoric. Another example of the misguided perceptions of rhetoric as implicitly good or bad is when people incorrectly deem rhetoric to be associated with intellect. People tend to believe that using more advanced language, especially for purposes deemed academic, gives the speaker credibility. Clearly, this is not the case, seeing as anybody can pick up a dictionary and find a more advanced word which suits their uses, but we still associate these words with intellect, correctness, and science. This means that anybody who wishes to push an agenda in the world of science can do so by influencing the public using this association to give themselves false credibility.

Rhetoric is like a knife in its variety of uses; it is useful for people with both good and bad intentions in many different ways. It is important to remember that rhetoric can be used to spread hatred and lies, but also ideas and truth. This brings us back to the quote: we must choose the kind of rhetoric we use and what we use it for.

Conclusion

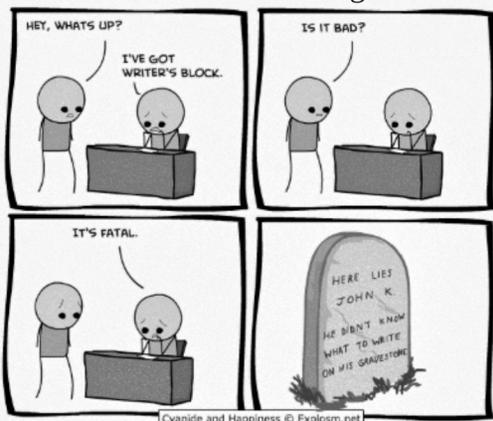
Throughout this course friendships have formed, tears have spilled, and 6-7s were shared. What started as a stiff, awkward classroom blossomed into a big, happy family. Together, we flourished with the student learning outcomes. The course readings and major assignments collectively assigned have challenged our knowledge of language, communication, and writing methods. The major assignments have allowed us to utilize and think of different writing processes, outlines, and adaptations into our current and future writings. The course readings given have also enhanced discernment when approaching decisions to make when incorporating rhetorical elements, such audience and purpose, when producing writing. This discourse community, rooted in the course ENC 1101, has allowed for feedback to be provided and applied into courseworks. Collectively as a result, positive outcomes have stemmed from this course which have influenced our curriculum journeys.

“is the idea that one can facilitate writing by embracing the blank page, by remembering “everything is in everything,” and by playing with words and names” (Carter 101).

Writer’s block happens to all writers, regardless of ability and skill. Fortunately, there are solutions that can allow a writer to resume writing, and move on from a stagnation period. One of those solutions is having a positive attitude and mindset that “everything is in everything” as stated in the chapter regarding writer’s block. This includes thinking of terminology, letters, ideas or events that relate to the specific objectives in a writing can lead to more phrases or words to be formulated, and ultimately put down on paper. Another way of moving past an occurrence of stagnance is applying past knowledge into future writings that may already be familiar to the writer. Personally for instance, writer’s block is an occurrence that disrupts my productivity and writing on a daily basis. My ADHD causes me to lose train of thought and stagnant writing processes. With this struggle, I’ve learned to take advantage of this by allowing my intrusive thoughts to circulate and somewhat relate to the ideas presented in writing. For example, when I take notice of repeating letters with the same beginning, such as the letter A, I come up with random terms and phrases that begin with that. To avoid forgetting and keeping organization, I typically jot down these thoughts on paper. Eventually, a phrase or term thought of will relate to one of the ideas presented in the assigned writing, resulting in resumed writing processes.

The concept of everything being in everything affirms that something can stem from nothing. Since every object has a portion of another, this shows that new ideas can emerge from an attribute or ingredient that

another object may consist of. Writing is an example of this by displaying the interconnectness that different sentences, phrases, grammar, and ideas have that reflect the overall message. While writer’s block is a frustrating occurrence, it is overcomeable.



“Students know that, on some level, they are writing to the rubric, instead of writing to think” (Leachy 259).

As I started to analyze Anna Leahy’s chapter titled “Rubrics Save Time and Make Grading Criteria Visible,” I thought about how this can relate to myself when I attended school. The bad idea that Leahy talked about is that what can make one write better is the rubric. It is relatable to myself because I can remember many instances where I wrote something not to state what is on my mind, but to please a teacher.

There is one experience that is very memorable. This was when I was in high school, and I had to complete an English assignment. I had points to make and relate to this topic that I could talk about if I wanted to. However, after I saw this list on this assignment, I no longer felt that way. This list included points such as using three transitions, using two quotes, and showing variation in sentence structure."After seeing the rubric, I was", no longer worried about making a point but am more worried about checking off points on this list. Leahy summarizes this when this writer goes on to say that having a list such as this to assess work is “an odd way to simultaneously overcomplicate and oversimplify how one looks at and judges a written text.”

Finally, what I received in return is just about places on this rubric that I didn't cover, rather than about ideas that I tried to cover. What one can take away is that there is a disadvantage to thoughtfulness within writing due to these rubrics. This is shown within our SLO regarding rhetorical flexibility because true writer development is taking place when there is a purposeful choice being made rather than by a rubric. To allow these ideas to grow without worrying about points being taken away, we can allow writing to have more depth, which is something that simply can't be had within some rubrics.

	3 (Best)	2 (Almost)	1 (Not Yet)
Content	There is one clear main idea that is well-developed with lots of details throughout the piece.	The main idea is somewhat clear, but needs more development throughout the piece.	The main idea is not well-developed.
Organization	The piece is well-organized and "flows"; many transition words show how the ideas are connected and the reader is never left feeling confused about what is happening.	The piece is somewhat organized and "flows" in some spots; some transition words are used but there are a few places where the reader gets confused as to what is happening.	The piece does not "flow" there are little to no transition words OR transition words are not effective where the reader feels confused about what is happening.
Word Choice	The piece contains sophisticated vocabulary words are used appropriately.	The piece contains some sophisticated words that are somewhat used appropriately.	The piece contains few sophisticated words; OR the words are rarely used and distracting to the reader.
Conventions	There are few (no more than 3) errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. It is clear the writer took time to carefully edit the piece.	There are some (4-6) errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. The writer made an attempt at editing.	There are many (7+) errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization which interfere with the reader's understanding of the piece. There appears to be little, if any, attempt at editing.
Reader's "Take Away"	The "take away" message is relevant and clear to almost all readers of this piece.	The "take away" message is somewhat relevant and clear to many readers of this piece.	Readers may finish and not understand the writer's purpose for this piece.
Scoring Legend	15 = 100%	12 = 80%	9 = 60%
	14 = 93%	11 = 88%	8 = 79%
	13 = 94%	10 = 85%	7 = 70%

“While many young people today may be digital natives, they are also digitally naïve” (Carter and Matzke 320).

The More Digital Technology the Better Technology is part of everyday life, and it affects how we live, learn, and write. Today’s students are called “digital natives” because they always use technology in school while many teachers are called “digital immigrants” because they find it difficult to adjust. Even though students grow up with technology, they often do not know basic skills like formatting documents or managing settings.

Research shows that a lot of use of technology trains young brains to multitask and makes it harder to focus on a deeper level, which could hurt critical thinking and writing. Tools like iPads, vlogs, or digital storytelling can make learning more engaging but they don't automatically improve writing. Teachers should choose technology carefully so that it supports learning instead of it being a distraction from learning. Just growing up with technology does not mean that students are experts at it. That is why teaching digital literacy and focus skills should be just as important as teaching writing.

Technology is powerful, but only when used with purpose. For students, digital tools like Microsoft Word, video editing apps, and learning platforms are a part of everyday schoolwork. We use them to write essays, participate in group work, and access feedback from instructors. Also, technology can be used for creative expression by making digital art, posting pictures and videos, and the use of video editing.

This article explains that while technology is everywhere in our lives and often brought into classrooms, it does not automatically make students better learners or writers. Writing classes work best when technology is used carefully and with purpose along with the traditional methods such as handwriting notes so that students build focus and digital literacy.

“failure is not an option” (Carr 76).

The first quote reflects a damaging mindset that society often pushes: that failure is a moral flaw, something only “bad” or irresponsible people experience. In the reading, it states “Failure is integral to learning and development, more so than external markers of achievement or success. An avoidance of failure in learning, or in writing, or in industry or parenting or any other human/community endeavor, represents an absence of creativity and an abundance of predictability, little to no risk, and perhaps even harmful or counter-productive thinking It exposes how failure becomes stigmatized, which can make people ashamed to try new things” (Carr 76). Ideally, this idea shouldn’t become complacent to someone who experiences failure, but should be a default perspective as to how there’s no “losing” in failure.

From the writing perspective, I see why failure genuinely can’t be an option. Writing requires perfection in various ways, grammatically and rhetorically. Critical thinking of what is being written, can’t really be perfect however some people interpret everything differently. This is common amongst those that don’t tend to write a lot, or really even read. The following quote from my selected choice in the reading explains as to why there’s only more to learn from the more you continue to write. It says “Writing is not a list of dos and don’ts, nor is success in writing a universally acknowledged ideal. Writing is about risk and wonder and a compulsion to make something known” (Carr 80). This quote supports more of the artistic and gradual build up of reasoning perspective. It’s essentially one of those things where you get what you put in which relates to the possibility of failing. The overall segment of the text I chose states well that one shouldn’t become complacent regardless of what they do, in this case writing. Complacency kills one’s artistic high ground and the work being put in needs to be consistent.



“There is no such thing as writing in general. Writing is always in particular” (Wardle 20).

Wardle’s assertion that “writing in general does not exist” transformed the way I viewed my writerly progress so far. I remember being told over and over throughout my schooling that once I had mastered the fundamentals, i.e., grammar, structure, and the five-paragraph essay, I was free to write anything I wanted. But Wardle shows us that writing is not a universal tool. It cannot just be transported from one area to another; it is a tool that adapts to the different factors of the writing situation like audience's and community's expectations, genre's conventions and writer's purpose, etc. This whole idea made me understand the reason why there have been some times when writing felt effortless while at other times it was nowhere near to say a “new language” was being spoken that I had to learn.

The examples that she provided were my very life experiences. In the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, the students wrote an “essay” and the different teachers still managed to expect completely different styles. Writing at AdventHealth as a volunteer made me change my writing again as I discovered how different the logs of patients, notes, and internal communication are in that community. None of these genres matched what I learned in the English class, and each had its own norms and expectations. Reading Wardle’s chapter makes me feel that writing in a new environment is so difficult just because I have to meet new norms and I am not the bad writer, I am just learning a new discourse.



“Students who read too many comics, watch too much television, or play too many digital games, according to this narrative, will produce naïve, emotional writing that is riddled with errors” (Williams 194).

Some of the most thought-provoking writing that I have seen has come from people who engage in popular culture, from television and movies to comics and video games. I think critics tend to devalue media that isn’t made for academic purposes because they feel like it is childish or lacks intelligence. Also, people tend not to take it seriously when someone writes an analysis that goes in depth about media and popular culture that is geared towards women and girls, like Taylor Swift, *My Little Pony*, *Barbie*, etc. Being “emotional” and vulnerable in your writing is a skill that I think people overlook. These students that are always engaging in popular culture are emotional with their writing because it is a topic that they are invested in; they are simply putting care into their work.

I find more enjoyment in a written assignment when I’m given the option to choose what to write about. At first, I have to get over this cringe feeling I get when writing about something in popular culture that I’m interested in, but after that, I feel actual motivation to write. Sometimes I dislike writing about my life or things I enjoy because I feel self-centered. However, after having to write two papers about my experiences with literacy this semester, I think I’ll have an easier time in the future. In high school, when I had to write or complete assignments based on a story, poem, or article that I thought was uninteresting, I found it so hard to write with feeling or passion. It was less of my voice and more of a robotic way of writing. Integrating popular culture into an academic setting helps create more well-rounded work, allowing students like me to make connections to traditional writing ideas that would otherwise be overlooked.

Failure is amateur. Failure is an indicator of weakness. Failure is unacceptable.

“FAILURE WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE”

We are often told that “Failure is not an option” (Carr 76), but many do not understand that failure is a prerequisite to success. When I read “Failure is Not an Option” by Allison D. Carr, I remembered my own struggles with writing throughout my life, and specifically when I first took ENC 1101/1102 in my junior year of high school. My first time taking ENC1101 I struggled to come up with topics to write about; I wrote argumentative essays on opinions I myself didn’t agree with, and my grades reflected my struggles. By the end of the first month of the semester I had already garnered a C- and my chances of an A were gone. While it wasn’t technically a failing grade, it was the lowest I have ever received and I was ashamed. I tried to hide it, never bringing it up to my family out of fear of what they would think of my academic future. I ended that semester with a C and by the end of the year I had taken all the English credits I would need for the rest of my high school and college career. But when time for Fall 2025 course selection came around, I elected to take ENC 1101 again. I wanted to prove to myself that I am not a “bad” writer; I wanted to prove that I had good, creative ideas that needed to be explored; I wanted to prove that

FAILURE. WOULDN’T. RUIN. MY. LIFE.

For my previous shortcomings didn’t prove my ineptitude, they reinforced my progress.

“These depictions perpetuate the idea that writing isn’t just easy- its magical work done by super-exceptional people” (Hundley 54).

I chose the reading “Writers are Mythical, Magical, and Damaged” by Teri Holbrook and Melanie Hundley. The title is what first stood out to me because that is how I originally perceived writers and authors: Someone so magical, smart, and above me; thinking I could never be considered a good writer until this class. There are so many myths when it comes to being a writer and I feel like this quote and reading represent all the writer's myths so well. I went into this class with all the myths in my head, that good writers and writers in general had some talent that I did not have, that they were better than me, that they had some magical power that gave them the ability to write so well and make all these connections and stories be seen. As I went through this course, I was shown how I am a writer as well. I learned that I could make connections about my life to other forms of rhetoric and write about it. I was able to write and share parts of my story through this writing, and I did not pick up a magical wand to help me.

I always believed that writers wanted to get away from reality and only write about the realities they made, but that’s not the case. So many writers write their stories about the life they lived, the communities they are a part of and I too, have the opportunity to write about my own small communities without being some crazy author with crazy fans. The stories that are put out in the world are big yes and the authors are successful yes but that does not mean they are the only writers on planet, something I learned was you do not have to be crazy or have crazy fans or use a magical wand and be better than everyone around you to be a writer, all you have to do is write, then you are considered a writer.



“The notion of one correct way of writing devalues the writing, thoughts, intelligence, and identities of people from lower-class backgrounds” (Pattanayak 85).

When I read Pattanayak’s chapter, I immediately thought about the times teachers, peers, or even family told me there was a right way to speak and write. The bad idea that correct English is the only acceptable English has shaped a lot of my experiences with literacy and language. It made me feel like there were certain spaces where my natural way of speaking didn’t belong.

One experience that came to mind was when I moved between home and school. At home, we mixed slang, speed, and different rhythms of speaking. At school, teachers corrected me for saying things that were completely normal in my community. They weren’t actually errors but they were just different dialects, different ways of communicating. But the way teachers reacted made it feel like the way I talked was somehow less educated. I started changing how I spoke in class, thinking it made me sound smarter or more professional. Looking back, I realize this was the exact pressure Pattanayak describes. It was the idea that Standard English equals intelligence.

Challenging this idea matters because it shapes people’s confidence, identity, and opportunities. If someone grows up being told that the language of their family or community is wrong, they learn to disconnect from who they are. That harm doesn’t just affect individuals—it continues systems of inequality in education. It puts the burden on minority students to code-switch constantly while everyone else gets to feel naturally “correct.”

From this chapter, I learned that writing is not just about rules but it’s about identity, culture, and audience. I want readers to understand that valuing multiple forms of language helps create more equitable classrooms. This connects directly to our SLO about multiple literacies, because acknowledging different ways of speaking means recognizing the diverse backgrounds and strengths students already bring with them.

“What is it about writing that generates this attitude, often held passionately, that some people are writers and others are not? Is it the romantic ideal of innate genius?” (Brooks 60).

This quote is a big idea that a lot of people hear growing up, that writing is this incredible gift that people are just born with. It makes writing sound almost mythical or something close to having perfect pitch. The problem with this to me is how limiting that is. To put people in a box and limit and label their creativity to me is horrible. I think that looking at it from a developmental standpoint is important. Sure, there are people who are naturally better at writing and pick it up easier. However, this shouldn’t disparage anyone from writing or expressing themselves creatively through it. Anyone can write. The basic foundations and fundamental ideas of writing can be taught to anyone. If you look at the way writers develop, the idea of it being this innate talent falls apart.

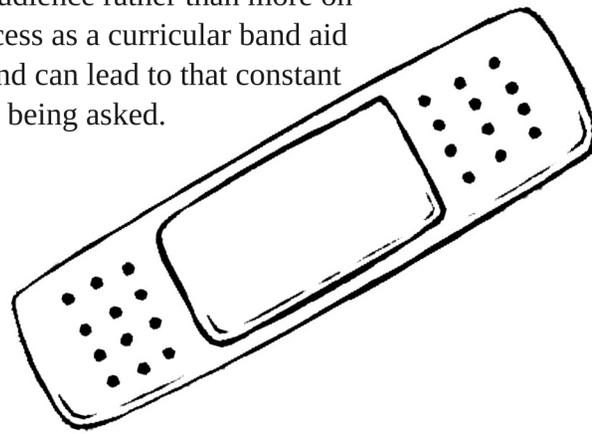
Writing isn't magic, it's a skill. A skill that, like any other, you have to hone and sharpen. You practice it by reading, writing, and seeing how other people communicate with it. Most people don't start out as brilliant writers. They write messy, have rough drafts, and get feedback on their work that they need to improve. That's the way I've improved my writing. By not being afraid to fail; but by having the hunger to be proven wrong for the sake of learning more. To be able to look at my work objectively and to show it to others expecting criticism is how I've gotten to the point I am at today. Writing has always been a big part of my life, but especially this past semester. The things I've learned from this class as well as outside the classroom writing my own poetry and music have helped me grow. From August to November, I am a much better writer than I would have been without this course.

“When framed as a response to the literacy crisis, writing instruction cannot help but carry a connotation of a desperate response to an epidemic” (Babb 15).

During my senior year of highschool, there would be times where I would look back over complete assignments and realize that I never actually achieved my initial goals. This is an example of the “curricular Band-Aid” since it was only a temporary cure and didn’t actually help me grow and progress in my writing skills. Part of this was due to the constraint and fear of focusing more on the mistakes instead of the point and well put in ideas to form the connection with my audience.

In the chapter, it is mentioned that writing isn’t about avoiding errors, but about “engaging in public discourse in all its varied forms.” Earlier this semester when working through my major assignment 2 writing piece, I was constantly engaged due to the fact that I was immersed in my topic, The Goldenwood House Church community. I was able to relate to the topic I was interested in while also being able to make academic connections like discourse communities and how they apply to my life outside of the group. When completing an assignment solely based on checking for grammatical errors and treating it more on the technical side it can be boring.

On the other hand, when treating it as a process and a way to address my desired points effectively to the audience it becomes a more effective and well put together product. This proves the point that writing should be focused on purpose and connection with the audience rather than more on the technical side and treating the writing process as a curricular band aid is detrimental to the point of the assignment and can lead to that constant fear which leads the writer to stray off what is being asked.



“Humor also is an effective means by which to teach the second-most-difficult thing to teach young writers: style. (The most difficult thing is how to spell ukulele.) Style often is the first element of writing to go when it comes to teaching young writers—in favor of elements such as developing a thesis, supporting that thesis with evidence, and putting a staple in the upper-left-hand corner” (Theune 182).

Humor is something that everyone has tried and most fail. Humor is something that can be very powerful. It can make a scary topic easy or it can make a hard topic easier to understand. A sense of humor can also help with a boring topic. It can turn the blah to something that you want to teach to your friends or something that becomes an inside joke that no one else would understand. As a person I am light-hearted and I try to use humor to keep a not so serious air around me. As a writer I keep that same idea into how I write. Me wanting to keep my writings light hearted and funny have caused issues with my teachers because they thought humor did not belong in writings. Now as I get higher in writing and I think back to when I first started to write I realise the impact it had on how I learned style and how I create my opening paragraph. To connect this to what I am learning this year The way I learned connects to the learning outcome 4 Decision Making & Production. It connects to this outcome because humor has affected the style I use when I write and my thought process when I write. It has also made me aware of the audience I am writing for. If I try to make a joke that would not resonate with the reader then the joke falls off and is bad. Humor is something that can be a powerful tool if used correctly but if used incorrectly will hurt you more then help.

