

Pedagogical Inquiry Grant – Pedagogical Enhancement
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Title: “Cosmopolitanism, Citizenship, and Belonging” Final Integrative Essay, Oral, and Writing Fellow Re-tooling

My PiG outlined three primary goals:

1. Revising my oral presentation guidelines and rubric from something half-baked and poorly communicated to students to something much more rigorous and seriously integrated into the course.
 2. Researching topics and creating a scaffolded structure and rubric for a final integrative essay.
 3. Developing a set of guidelines for better incorporating the Writing Fellow into 200-level courses.
- What was the outcome of your project and how did it align with your original goals as stated in your application?
 - What sense do you have at this point that your project has enhanced student learning and what will you be looking at in the future to know whether the project was successful?
 - What were the limitations or failings of this project, and how, in retrospect, might they have been better addressed or remedied?
 - How do you envision sharing the results of your work with other colleagues at Whitman (or elsewhere)?

Outcomes, Goals, Student Learning, and Self-Critique

My PiG was informed at every level by conversations with Nicki Caddell, who took “Cosmopolitanism” in Fall 2018 and was also my Encounters student last Spring. The good outcomes can be credited to her sense of what works well for students. I have combined my answers to the first three “outcomes” questions into one response. I have based those answers on student evaluations, an informal course survey on the Final Integrative Essay, and the quality of student work.

1. *Oral presentation.* For this goal I re-wrote my assignment to make it much more formal and also created an “Oral Presentation Rubric” modeled on my writing rubric (attached). This rubric is slightly different from my writing rubric in that it delineates some errors in approach students should avoid. Rather than making the Oral Presentation optional – which was the case last year – I required it. (Last year the men in the class avoided this exercise nearly across the board.) Students did the oral in groups of two – a suggestion I credit to Jenna Terry – and I reviewed the rubric together with the two students after the oral to discuss the strengths of the strategies they each adopted. Student expressed appreciation for experiencing what an oral looked like as audience and peer-questioner, and reported that having another student in the room helped with their experience of nervousness. Ninety-percent of students indicated that they did not have experience doing this type of presentation and felt unprepared/unaware of the kind of format they might be faced with for the Senior Assessment in their major. (The model I adopted loosely aligns with the

Philosophy Senior Assessment.) The intimacy of the faculty office presentation also allowed me to mentor several women students who did outstanding jobs, encouraging them to do their presentations for the Whitman Undergraduate Conference and explore undergraduate research options.

This year students did much better with the presentations; they treated it as the equivalent of a paper and were exceptional in their preparation. Indeed, several 'overprepared' and I was truly impressed by their command of the assigned texts. I attribute this improvement to my posing better questions – this included flagging connections for their 'upcoming oral presentation' in class – tagging nervous students to come talk to me about the oral, and the clarification of expectations communicated by the rubric. Roughly 75% of the class did their best intellectual work for the course in the presentations – a fact I am still processing. Roughly one-quarter of the students practiced together, which added a sense of community and investment in the course, and intellectual elements of the presentations came back in their remaining essays and Final Integrative Essay; the sense I got was that students knew this material in ways that went beyond what they tend to accomplish in their paper writing. Those students who did not do well either did not prepare adequately or were doing poorly in the course.

As an added aspect, I was able to discuss with students how their approach to breaking down the oral would be a great way to draft a paper, and had three students (sophomores) dramatically improve their essay structures following the oral by replicating drafting an outline on 4 x 6 cards. This is an argument for my assigning the oral as the second requirement for the course as a support to their paper writing. I had one very talented student with a significant accommodation who did two oral presentations as a way to stay on top of material; their work was rigorous and meaningful, and I will be adding presentations to my repertoire as a good way to address (and build the confidence of) a subset of student learning abilities.

In looking toward the future, the format of this kind of oral presentation is something that I'll be including in *all* my 100 and 200 level classes. I have tended to focus on the analytical essay, but student performance convinced me that this is a substantive intellectual assignment. I felt it helped with student confidence in surprising ways; students differently found their voices presentations. In Encounters this Spring I will be assigning students to either meet with my two Writing Fellows or with me in order to communicate the goals of this assignment. Students seemed to have either had some version of "Speech" in high school (but not practiced it since Whitman) or have had no exposure at all.

2. *Final Integrative Essay*. Nicki and I had conversations about the integrative essay all summer. Nicki researched the topics we had come up, narrowing down a selection of readings on "Female Genital Cutting," "Detention Campus," "Immigration," and "Belonging on Campus." I crafted an assignment sheet that scaffolded the construction of the essay and created a rubric for it. I also posed a set of questions on the board in class intended to keep student discussion groups on track in translating conversations into brainstorming. The outcome for this assignment was improved from last year, but also depended on the particular group of students and balance of the readings; its success was uneven in ways that the structure of the course can partially improve on. What will remain limiting is the ability of student groups to stay on track in ways that support their essay writing and what is often students' first effort at writing a persuasive essay.

In looking forward and assessing students' experience of their learning, the first thing I need to do is re-balance the selection of readings. The "FGC" grouping worked best, but students

requested a greater diversity of reading (personal narrative, film, short stories, etc.). The readings for the “Detention Camps” group were conceptually unfocused, and there were too many long and difficult selections. This theme would be better defined as “Border and Nation-State,” and it is clear that I need to consult colleagues to get more contemporary readings as well as a better variety of readings. The “Belonging On Campus” group’s papers turned out to be intellectually light; they were the weakest set of essays. Here, I think I need to find several more weighty articles and establish guidelines that ‘force’ students to engage the articles first rather than just vent about Whitman. Based upon a current Philosophy Honors Thesis that grew out of my class last year, I want to add a unit on “Cosmopolitanism and Climate Change” on which there is an increasing body of work. Overall, it is clear that this is an idea and structure worth retaining; however, I need to engage colleagues and students in coming up with a more balanced and varied set of readings.

I had students do both an informal evaluation of the Final Integrative Essay as well as an “Author’s Note,” each of which garnered different kinds of information. Two groups stalled in the structure of their discussions, and over half of students felt that individuals or pairs of students should be assigned leading discussion on articles for their group. (I asked groups to decide on how they wanted to structure discussions, and included this as an option; none of the groups took it.) The way I will structure discussion next time is to have students meet in their groups before Thanksgiving Break to divvy up reading assignments and to generate a common set of questions they want to guide their engagement with individual texts. The most successful group found that they weren’t generating much disagreement, and one strategy would be to assign a student the role of playing devil’s advocate. Students liked the free-writing I assigned, which asked them to connect readings to their evolving essay idea; however, a problem in discussion was that they were not engaging assigned texts deeply. Students also commented that they wanted more reporting out to the entire class about what the other groups were doing.

To address these issues I will set up discussion parameters and tasks before Thanksgiving Break by creating course documents that help make the daily discussion structure more guided. Part of this will be having students play discussion roles – “discussion leader,” “textual evidence keeper,” “devil’s advocate,” “big picture overseer,” etc. While I did a generally good job varying the feel of each discussion day, this could be also improved so that each discussion day has its own sense of energy and tasks.

The Integrative Essays themselves varied in quality, with some students doing their best writing of the semester and others struggling with the form. Several students responded in the “Author’s Note” that this is the piece of writing that has pushed them the most at Whitman and that they really cared about what they were saying; for others, the Integrative Essay was indistinguishable from other course essays or were too personal, confusing opinion for persuasion (this was most apparent for the “Belonging On Campus” group). This was anticipated, and I did my best to indicate possible pitfalls in my rubric. The “Author’s Note” on the essay was also intended to communicate struggles students had with the form. I remain convinced it was a good challenge for students and pushed their writing skills. In the future, I would like to include sample essays that capture the persuasive and argumentative tonality of this form, contrasting it with the analytical essay. And while I did signpost how course readings modeled the goals of the persuasive essay, it would help students to have a separate writing workshop with writing samples to show the difference between the analytical essay and the persuasive essay.

3. The place where I succeeded the least in my PiG is keeping up with Nicki on the kind of work she was doing with students and what would have guided that work better. Committed students scheduled with Nicki throughout the course; the effectiveness of her work was communicated to me both by Nicki and those students. While this worked for those student, it also left out students who would have benefitted by this additional structure. I had one sophomore fail the course because he could never quite get on top of things. In the future I will require first years and sophomores to meet with the Writing Fellow for their first essay. I will also require struggling student to meet with the Writing Fellow or me over the progression of the semester – and “struggling” had more to do with time management than the quality of the actual papers. I had a lot of late work from Seniors, which meant reduced grades. I am unclear what ‘help’ would have meant here =.

Nicki (as well as a another student from this year’s “Cosmopolitanism” course) will be my Writing Fellows for Encounters Spring Semester, and I have already initiated a conversation with them. How I use Writing Fellows for Encounters is much more well-worked out than for my 200-level courses. I want to use conversations with them to talk about what the difference is since they will be familiar with both contexts.

To disseminate the results of the PiG I will be distributing my Oral Presentation rubric through Encounters (I signed up to gather and present on the oral competencies learning goal”) and parameters for the integrative essay to the directors of the Global Studies concentration and members of the General Studies Working Group, which entertaining the idea of an integrative essay.

Having my PiG was extremely helpful in retooling a new course because it lead to structured conversations with Nicki and a much more coherent (and scaffolded approach). I have truly benefitted from the support!

Encounters Presentation Grading Rubric

Insight (Thesis Idea)	
The thesis idea of the presentation is grounded in an accurate and contextually appropriate interpretation of the text. <i>The presentation avoids unfounded opinion, generalization, and 'filler' ideas.</i>	
The presentation has an intellectually complex idea; the presenter communicates passion and interest. <i>The presentation avoids the feel of not caring about the idea or communicating a lack of preparation.</i>	
The presentation is developed with nuance, depth, and sensitivity to time parameters. <i>The presentation avoids superficial treatment of ideas because of trying to do too much or digression that suggests having little to say on the text.</i>	
Structure and Organization	
The thesis of the presentation is carefully phrased and makes a strong claim that gives listeners a clear sense of direction. <i>The presentation avoids weak assertions, summary, and a lack of clarity upfront.</i>	
The presentation includes a road-map that tells listeners how the presentation will unfold. <i>The presentation avoids the feeling of a lack of direction and clarity about its progression.</i>	
The presentation effectively recaps key ideas and assertions. <i>The presentation avoids assuming listeners have understood key ideas and is following transitions and connections.</i>	
The introduction of the presentation is interesting or persuasive and sparks the listener's interest. <i>The presentation avoids starting abruptly or immediately jumping into textual analysis.</i>	
The conclusion draws out further implications or suggests the presenters own next questions. <i>The presentation avoids the feeling of just stopping and leaving the presentation unfinished.</i>	
Evidence and Argument	
Central ideas are textually grounded and developed in a way that narratively flows. <i>The presentation avoids feeling like a book review or summary, or collection of unconnected passages of text.</i>	
Evidence is strategically chosen and fully integrated into the presentation in a way that illustrates larger ideas. <i>The presentation avoids incorporating too much or too little evidence.</i>	
The analysis of evidence is accurate and insightful, and acknowledges complexity. <i>The presentation avoids letting evidence speak for itself or substitutes reading quotes for analyzing them.</i>	
Expression and Style	
The presenter is attentive to tone of voice, pace, and any personal tics, e.g. hair or pen twirling. <i>The presenter avoids a bodily presence that distracts from the presentation.</i>	
The presentation strategically employs a variety of rhetorical techniques to create interest. <i>The presentation avoids feeling mechanical, flat, overly rehearsed, or read.</i>	
Personal voice and style enhance presentation development, meaning, and listeners' experience. <i>The presenter avoids making a connection with listeners or communicating that they care.</i>	
Conventions	
The presenter is attentive to the formal nature of the assignment and is comfortable. <i>The presenter avoids both informality and overformality.</i>	

Final Integrative Essay

Overview

Numerous selections from our course – and Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism* in particular – model the goals of the Integrative Essay in combining philosophical analysis with the discussion of contemporary issues, current opinion, and personal narrative. The Final Integrative Essay asks you to apply the different conceptual frameworks from the course (e.g. universality, particularity, vulnerability, justice) to a contemporary issue, deepening and complicating your understanding of that issue, as you develop a philosophically grounded position on it. You will be asked to engage five texts on that issue that expand and challenge your understanding of its presentation in the course. Integrative Essays should feel like a reach beyond the course that invites you to re-see and creatively re-appropriate its conceptual resources.

The Integrative Essay was adopted to redress a weakness in your Whitman education. *NSSE data indicates that, compared to peer institutions, Whitman students are less likely to apply facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations. They also report less growth in learning to address and seek meaningful solutions to complex world problems, or in drawing from different courses and significant personal interests and experiences in completing assignments.* The design of the Integrative Essay seeks practice those skills. It models the Global Studies Concentration ‘final capstone’ and scaffolds the kind of work in small-groups that is part of studying for the Philosophy Department’s senior comprehensive exam.

Integrative Essay Topics

There are three integrative essay topics that will be explored in groups of four to five. Group assignments seek to balance gender, class year, and background in philosophy; otherwise groups have been assigned randomly. To switch groups directly contact someone in the group you want to be in to see if they are willing to trade. The three groups are:

- Female genital cutting and circumcision (FGC or FGM)
- Immigrant detention camps
- Belonging on campus

Integrative Essay Components

- Leading or facilitating discussion in class on an article assigned for your group
- Participating in a group presentation on your topic as the course capstone. (20 minute presentations assigned for the last day of class, Thursday, December 12th)
- 6-7 page Integrative Essay and 750 word Reflection, due on Friday, December 20th at 9:00 a.m. (last day of finals) and posted on our Canvas course site
- The essay Reflection is a separate document and should reflect on your essay process. It should be a thoughtful discussion about what you learned in executing a challenging final assignment that closely approximates some Senior Exam and Senior Thesis structures.

Note: Work on the Integrative Essay will be incremental – but intensive – starting from when you return from Thanksgiving Break. Please note that someone from your group (or your group as a whole) will be responsible for leading small-group discussion on Tuesday, December 3 after we return from Thanksgiving Break. There will be a required outside-of-class organizational meeting the week of November 18 for your group to discuss specific textual assignments and to generate a conversational template/free writing worksheet that helps you to organize discussions, make connections between disparate texts and course content, and strategize the essay.

Essay Goals and Skillsets

The Integrative Essay is designed with several goals in mind that practice lateral skillsets, that is, skillsets that cross academic disciplines, off-campus programs, and have broad application beyond Whitman.

- Critical Thinking The essay invites you to take conceptual resources presented in the course and extend beyond them in applying those resources to a specific topic. Critical thinking involves not just the narrow discussion of texts presented in class, but the application of ideas to new and unfamiliar contexts. This involves a higher-level skillset in re-seeing concepts through their possible applications and expanding them, critiquing them, and modifying them by way of the engagement with new, real-world particulars. The goal of the essay is not a narrowly constrained paper on your assigned topic but a piece that integrates and shows the connection with material presented in the course. Essays that, for example, focus exclusively on immigrant detention camps but do not address the philosophical material in the course are not what is sought, nor are essays on only material presented in the course. Instead, essays should show the connection to the course in integrating and applying new concepts to new information.
- Analysis and Synthesis The readings assigned for the Integrative Essay include a range of texts – academic, personal narrative, popular, controversial, etc. As such, they provide a ‘real world’ snapshot of your given topic (diverse, messy, incomplete, incompatible). The Integrative Essay asks you to analyze those texts taken in themselves while also connecting them to each other and the concepts presented in the course as you work toward crafting your own – and philosophically grounded – position on your assigned topic. Analysis asks: What new idea and information does this particular text contribute? Synthesis asks: How does it fit – or challenge – the position I am coming to or what I thought I knew about the topic?

The collection of texts might usefully be thought in relation to a researched paper or a Senior Thesis: You have the relevant texts, now what will do you with them? What is the overarching question that organizes your engagement with your group’s topic and the course? What will you argue and which texts and quotes provide your best evidence? What are the complicating points you will need to raise that demonstrate nuance and detail and that make your position persuasive to someone who may disagree with you? How will you decide what to leave out (analysis) on the way to putting the best pieces together as you make your argument (synthesis)?
- Collaboration Discussion of Integrative Essay texts require the exchange of ideas on new material as well as material presented in the course. While you will not be writing collaborative essays, small-group discussion challenges you to answer the questions, What do I think about this text? How does it connect? Where do I disagree?, in dialogue with others in the course. It thus serves as a vehicle for understanding not just an individual text but the course as a whole as you experiment with articulating your own position on new material. Collaboration will require you to decide on how you want to organize your small-group discussion, what are the best practices for conversation (including moderating disagreement on contentious topics), a common set of questions you want to ask for each text, and how you want to connect small-group discussion to brainstorming and structuring your essay. Groups will be required to do a twenty-minute presentation on how material expanded and challenged concepts presented in the course; presentations are not intended to move toward

consensus on the topic but to demonstrate an informed complexity representative of your group's discussion.

- **Conversation** The course as a whole emphasizes conversation as an essential practice of cosmopolitanism. Students on campus are increasingly atomized by the more essentializing aspects of identity categories (Appiah's "Medusa Effect"), are fearful of making hurtful mistakes or revealing themselves to be ignorant, and have become self-silencing. The Integrative Essay challenges such narrowing as antithetical to a liberal arts education by creating a framework to discuss a controversial topic; the goal is to both reflectively listen to others and come up with a reasoned argument for your own position, where 'reasoned' implies acknowledging and contending with complication. The Essay intends to model student-guided intellectual conversation as an ethic within and beyond the classroom, one essential to being educated, rigorous, and meaningfully empathetic.

Integrative Essay Rubric and Parameters

- Approach** The Integrative Essay approach engages texts in the course while going beyond it in incorporating new material. It succeeds in re-seeing conceptual resources presented in the course and in making them the author's own by applying them to the assigned topic. The Essay avoids simply recapitulating essays already written in overfocusing on material presented in the course; it also avoids departing too far from the philosophical content of the course in engaging new material. Instead, the Essay strikes an appropriate balance between texts and ideas presented in the course and new material; it strategically chooses the best texts and concepts for making its argument.
- Scope** The Integrative Essay has a narrow and appropriate scope for a 6 to 7 page paper; the narrowness of the essay's scope is a dimension of both its persuasiveness and clear organizational structure. The Essay avoids trying to do everything (too much synthesis) or focusing too narrowly on a particular text or presentation of its topic (too specific an analysis). Instead, the essay is strategic in its scope and approach: it both narrows and synthesizes in communicating what the author most wants to say and the evidence they select in saying it.
- Argument** The Integrative Essay presents a philosophically grounded and persuasive argument. It does not simply analyze the texts with the goal of communicating understanding but takes a position on the material, seeking to convince or move the reader to that position. The Essay avoids simply analyzing material without evaluating it; it also avoids making assertions unsupported by evidence or analysis. Instead, the Essay uses analysis to persuade the reader about a topic on which there are multiple strong positions; it seeks to convince the reader of the author's own position in the face of competing or opposed positions.
- Complication** The Integrative Essay includes rhetorical and argumentative strategies that acknowledge complication. It succeeds in addressing alternative points of view in the process of persuading the reader toward the author's own position. The Essay avoids being reductive in making valuative claims; it also avoids making sweeping generalizations that exclude contrary evidence in forwarding its position. Instead, the essay effectively uses the acknowledgement of complication as a dimension of its persuasiveness.

- Writing** The Integrative Essay includes all of the elements of good writing practiced in other essays for the course (see my “Writing Rubric”). It rises to the additional challenge of having to strategically address and move between multiple texts and positions. It extends the skills of solid analytical writing to the form of the persuasive essay in, for example, the thesis statement and road-map, the framing of paragraphs, topic sentences, clincher sentences, etc. The author’s writing feels controlled and purposeful at every level.
- Reflection** The essay Reflection feels like a genuine consideration of the author’s process. It is well-balanced and thoughtful in addressing the Essay’s successes, and appropriately diagnostic in addressing its weaknesses. The Reflection discusses successes and weaknesses in specific terms and in ways that will be helpful to the writer in the future. It is honest about skillsets the author has not yet mastered or that are in progress, and suggest steps the author may want to take as they progress to similar assignments in seminars, as part of the Global Studies Concentration, or in the Senior Year.