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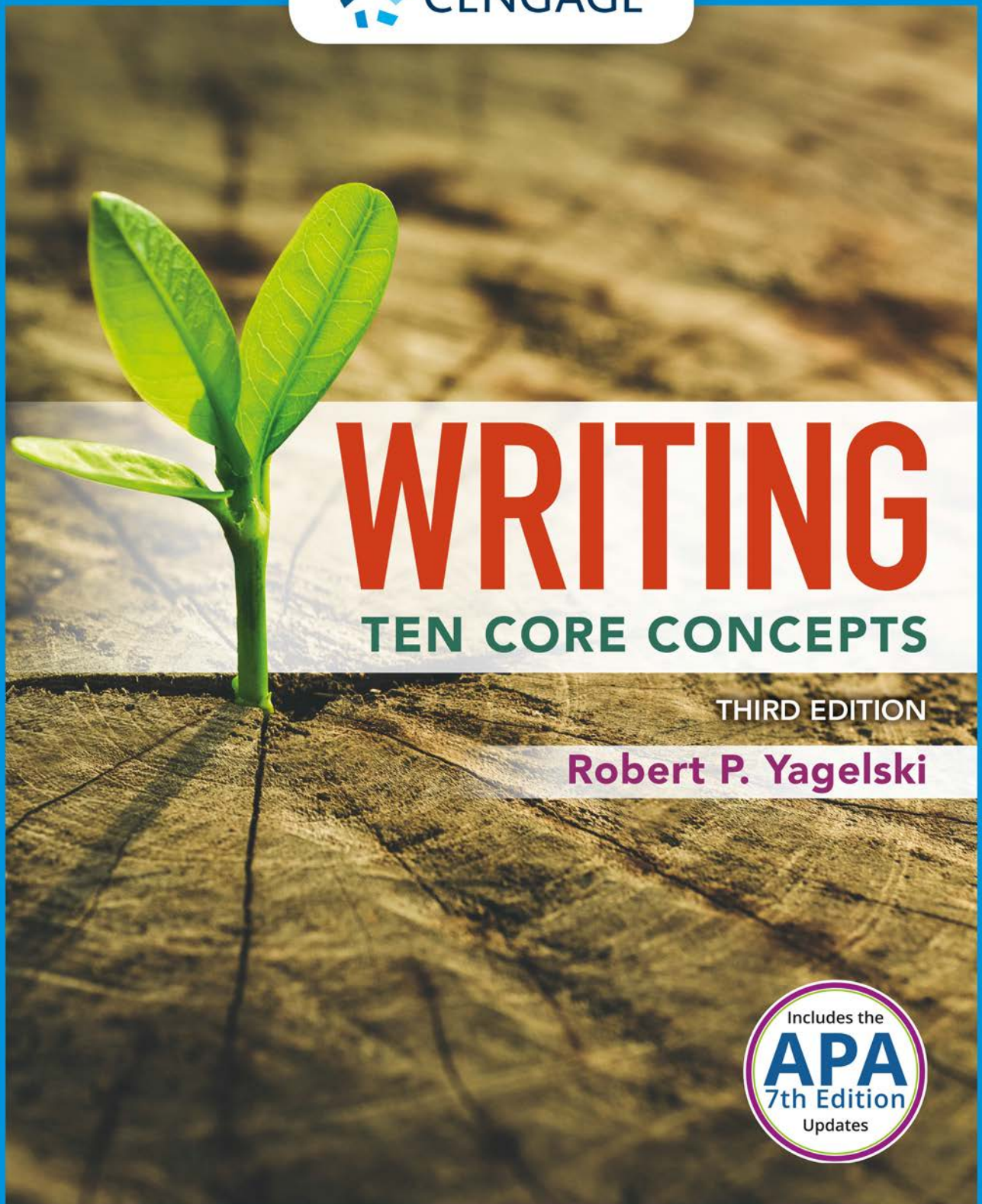

WRITING

TEN CORE CONCEPTS

THIRD EDITION

Robert P. Yagelski

Includes the APA 7th Edition Updates

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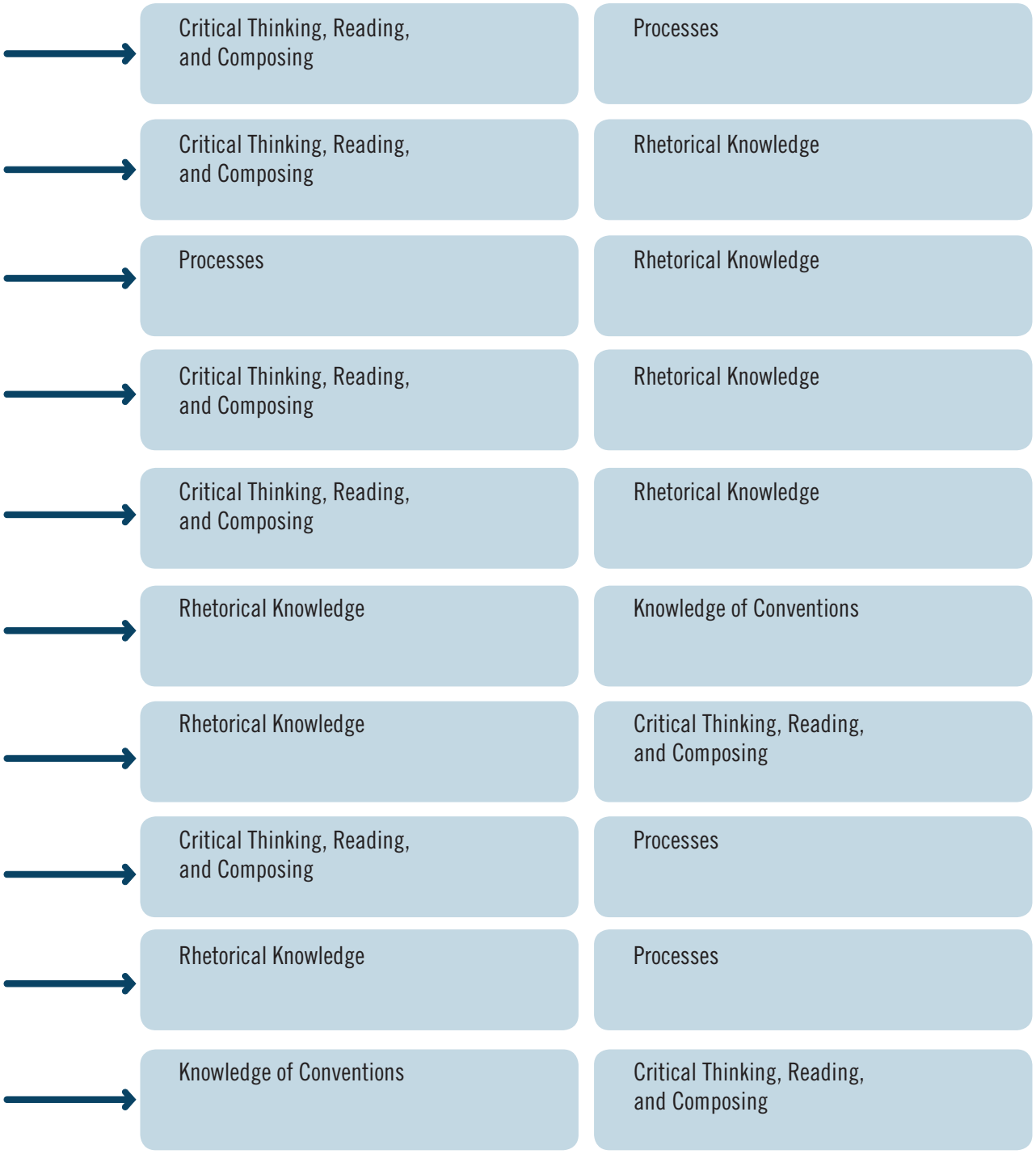

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Writing

Ten Core Concepts

Third Edition

Robert P. Yagelski
University at Albany, State University of New York

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Writing: Ten Core Concepts **3rd Edition**
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Preface

Writing is a way to understand and participate in the world around us. It is a vehicle for learning—a way to make sense of our experiences and convey what we learn to others. Writing is a powerful means of individual expression and social interaction that has the capacity to change us. As the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges put it, "At its best, writing has helped transform the world."

Composition teachers know all this, of course. They understand the power of writing, and they know that writing well is necessary for students to succeed in college and beyond. But instructors also know that a one-semester course is never quite enough to help students develop the sophisticated skills they will need to write effectively in their college classes and in their lives outside school. Research indicates that students need their entire college careers to develop those skills. First-year writing courses can lay the foundation for that process.

To make the most of the composition course, *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* focuses on the most important skills and knowledge that students must develop to be able to write the kind of sophisticated prose expected in college. It teaches the foundational lessons that students need to develop their competence as writers.

A Focus on Important Aspects of Writing

Research indicates that most college students tend to have difficulty with a few crucial aspects of writing:

- addressing an audience effectively
- focusing on a main idea and developing it sufficiently
- organizing texts appropriately
- adopting an appropriate register or "voice" in writing
- supporting assertions or arguments
- identifying and using appropriate sources
- revising effectively
- applying the conventions of academic writing

For the most part, these difficulties apply across disciplines and forms of writing. Significantly, research reveals that most of these problems arise from three main sources:

- students' lack of understanding of the rhetorical nature of writing
- students' inexperience with different rhetorical tasks across the college curriculum
- students' misunderstanding of how to manage the process of writing

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In other words, these problems arise from a basic misunderstanding of the rhetorical and social nature of writing and inexperience with managing the writing process *in the context of varied rhetorical tasks*, especially the kind of writing tasks typical of academic work in college.

Consequently, *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* rests on three central ideas about writing:

- *Writing is a rhetorical act*. Writing is fundamentally an interaction between a writer and a reader within a specific social context. In this sense, writing is always a social activity, and effective writing connects writers and readers in complex and powerful ways.
- *Writing is a way to participate in the conversations that shape our lives*. Through writing, writers and their readers collaborate in knowledge-making and share information and opinions about issues that matter to them. Writing enables us to take part in the many ongoing conversations about important matters that affect how we live and how we understand ourselves and the world we inhabit. In the most basic sense, writing is a way to *construct* the world by participating in these complex conversations.
- *Writing is a means of inquiry*. Writing is an intellectual activity that can lead to a deeper understanding of ideas, experiences, and information. It is a means of understanding ourselves and the world we share. Writing can engage students in careful, critical thinking about themselves and the world around them. Writing is a unique and powerful vehicle for learning.

These ideas inform both the content and structure of *Writing: Ten Core Concepts*. As students are guided through various writing tasks and learn to manage the process of writing efficiently, they also gain a fuller understanding of the nature of writing as rhetoric, conversation, and inquiry. This book will help composition instructors meet a central challenge in working with student writers: helping students develop a sophisticated understanding of writing and gain experience as writers acting on that understanding.

Writing: Ten Core Concepts emphasizes what is essential in writing at the college level and guides students as they apply that knowledge to various writing tasks. It trains students to think rhetorically and helps them manage the fundamental characteristics of effective academic writing. In this regard, the Ten Core Concepts serve as both a framework for understanding writing and a practical, step-by-step guide for negotiating the demands of academic writing tasks.

Ten Core Concepts

The Ten Core Concepts distinguish this textbook from other writing guides. Most composition textbooks try to cover every conceivable aspect of writing in college and beyond, presenting far more material than students could ever grasp and retain in a single semester. That approach ultimately waters down the most important lessons that student writers must learn. *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* is different. It emphasizes what students must really learn to become effective writers.

These Core Concepts are not basic skills, nor are they procedures for completing specific kinds of writing tasks. Rather, they are fundamental insights into the nature of writing that students must enact as they complete varied writing tasks. These Core Concepts boil down what has been learned through research and practice into key ideas about what writing is and how effective writing works. For example, Core Concept 4—"a writer must have something to say"—emphasizes

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the need for a piece of writing to convey a clear main point or idea. Studies indicate that college writing instructors identify the lack of a clear main idea as one of the most common weaknesses in student writing. This concept helps students understand why effective writing in most genres is characterized by a focus on a main idea; it also helps them understand how the different expectations in various academic disciplines can shape a writer's main idea and how that main idea is presented and developed in specific kinds of texts. Most importantly, the concept guides students through a process that enables them to identify, refine, and articulate the main idea of any writing project they are working on. In this way, the Core Concepts can deepen students' understanding of key insights about writing at the same time that students practice applying those insights in their own writing.

The Ten Core Concepts are not prescriptive. They are not step-by-step instructions for writing in specific genres. Instead, they are fundamental but flexible guidelines for writing; they serve as a set of heuristics that students can apply to *any* writing task. *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* is informed by the basic idea that practice is essential in developing writing competence. In a sense, this idea is the 11th Core Concept. Only through sustained, guided practice in writing different kinds of texts for various rhetorical situations can students develop the understanding and ability to write effectively for different purposes. Accordingly, *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* relies, in part, on the repetition of the Ten Core Concepts to give students the practice they need to make these Concepts part of their repertoire as writers.

The Structure of *Writing: Ten Core Concepts*

Writing: Ten Core Concepts is organized into six parts. Part 1 introduces students to the Core Concepts. Parts 2, 3, and 4 guide students through the most common forms of three main categories of writing: analysis, argument, and narrative. The focus in these three sections is on helping students understand the uses of various genres *within rhetorical contexts*. Through contemporary examples and engaging exercises, students learn how various forms of writing enable them to address specific audiences and effectively accomplish various rhetorical purposes; moreover, these chapters give students sustained practice in applying the Ten Core Concepts to different kinds of writing and rhetorical situations. Part 5 addresses critical reading and research skills. Finally, Part 6 helps students design documents, create presentations, and review and apply conventions of writing. A brief description of each of these main sections follows:

Part 1: A Guide to Writing Effectively. The four chapters in this section introduce students to the essential insights into writing that they must acquire if they are to be able to apply their writing skills effectively in different contexts. In this section, students explore the fundamental ideas about writing described previously: writing as rhetoric, as conversation, and as inquiry. Most important, they learn and practice the Ten Core Concepts that form the heart of this textbook. Chapter 2 explains these concepts, using examples to illustrate the lessons as well as exercises to help students understand how to apply the concepts in their own writing. Chapter 3 is an interactive, visual guide students can use to apply the Ten Core Concepts to any piece of writing. Chapter 4 presents a case study of a first-year student writer as she applies the Ten Core Concepts to complete a writing assignment.

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Part 2: Writing to Analyze. The six chapters in Part 2 help students acquire competence in the most common forms of analytical writing in college. Chapter 5 introduces important features of analysis. Each of the other chapters explores the purposes and features of a different form of analytical writing and, using the Ten Core Concepts, guides students through an analytical writing project. The chapters also include practice in some of the key intellectual tasks associated with analysis, such as using a theoretical framework, that often challenge students.

Part 3: Writing to Persuade. In this section, students gain an understanding of the principles of effective argumentative writing, and they work through writing projects representing three main kinds of argument. Using the Ten Core Concepts as a guide for their writing, students explore the nature and purposes of argument in various contexts and practice applying the essential elements of argumentation for different rhetorical purposes.

Part 4: Writing to Narrate and Inform. The chapters in this section help students learn how to write effective narratives for different rhetorical purposes and also appreciate the important uses of narrative in academic contexts. Like the chapters in Parts 2 and 3, the chapters in this section guide students in applying the Ten Core Concepts so that they produce effective narrative and informative writing that meets the needs of various rhetorical situations.

Part 5: Essential Reading and Research Skills. This section provides students with practical advice about working with source material, conducting research for their various writing projects, and documenting sources. Chapter 19 focuses on essential intellectual skills that are important to the work that students do throughout college, including reading academic and nonacademic texts as well as summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing texts. Chapter 20 helps students learn to write effective summary-response essays, an increasingly common genre that requires the application of the critical skills of summary and synthesis. Chapters 21, 22, and 23 provide an up-to-date guide for finding, evaluating, and using source material in an interconnected world in which powerful digital tools provide access to an astonishing amount of information, the sheer volume and variety of which require sophisticated critical evaluation. Chapter 24 guides students in compiling an annotated bibliography, an important kind of academic text to which students apply the key lessons from the preceding five chapters in this section. Finally, Chapters 25 and 26 help students understand and apply the guidelines for citing sources recommended by the MLA and the APA.

Part 6: Design and Style for 21st Century Writers. The four chapters in this section address the traditional challenges of design and style in the context of powerful digital technologies and contemporary perspectives on language and culture. In Chapter 27, students learn key lessons about an increasingly important aspect of effective writing today: document design. Some of those lessons are applied directly in Chapter 28, which helps students learn to develop effective presentations. Chapter 29 guides students in developing an effective writing style, with specific attention to the stylistic conventions of academic writing, which often confuse students. Finally, Chapter 30 helps students craft effective, engaging prose and avoid errors that can weaken their writing. Rather than trying to reproduce a comprehensive handbook, this chapter focuses on the most common problems in student writing, including the formal errors that research shows are typical of college student writing.

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Throughout *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* students encounter varied examples of effective writing in different genres and different media. They see how other writers, including student writers, meet the challenges of contemporary writing in college and beyond, and they are given an assortment of opportunities to practice what they learn, all the while using the Ten Core Concepts as their framework for writing.

Integrated Coverage of Digital Literacy Practices

Writing: Ten Core Concepts focuses on the contemporary student who lives in a technological, digitized, globalized age. To write well today requires students to manage many different rhetorical tasks using various technologies in different media, including constantly evolving social media that have become essential tools for communication. Rather than addressing "digital literacy" as a separate skill or topic, *Writing: Ten Core Concepts* incorporates important and emerging digital technologies and literacy practices into the advice and practice it provides students for all their writing tasks. Throughout this textbook, students encounter up-to-date examples and exercises that reflect various uses of communications technologies, and they receive advice for taking advantage of these technologies to meet the needs of the rhetorical situations within which they are writing.

More Student Reading Selections and a New Genre

- **New Readings with an Emphasis on Writing by Students:** Twenty-eight new full-length reading selections in this edition provide engaging models of important forms of writing. Twelve of these new readings are by student writers, and most chapters that include reading selections feature at least one essay by a student. Many of these student essays were written for first-year writing classes, and several were cited with awards for excellence. Together, the readings—by professional and student writers—represent a range of genres and address timely issues such as race relations, controversies surrounding trigger warnings and freedom of expression, environmental sustainability, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on various aspects of contemporary life.
- **New Coverage of Literacy Narratives:** Chapter 17 helps students understand the uses of this increasingly popular genre and provides advice, based on the Ten Core Concepts, to guide students in developing their own in-depth and engaging literacy narratives.

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New Chapters on Presentations and Important Academic Genres

- **Expanded Treatment of Summary-Response Writing.** Chapter 20 guides students through the process of creating essays in this increasingly important form, beginning with an exploration of occasions for summary-response writing, within and beyond college writing assignments, and culminating in the application of the Ten Core Concepts to a summary-response project.
- **New Coverage of Annotated Bibliographies.** Chapter 24 guides students in developing an annotated bibliography as an important tool for research and inquiry, focusing on writing accurate and effective annotations as well as creating correct bibliographic entries in MLA or APA style.
- **New Coverage of Presentations.** Chapter 28 provides in-depth advice for developing and delivering presentations, whether in real time or asynchronously, emphasizing the rhetorical character of presentations and their usefulness as a tool for inquiry.

Enhanced Coverage of Critical Reading Strategies

Chapter 19 features a new section focused on critical reading strategies for nonacademic texts. Students today must learn to navigate an enormous amount and variety of material that is available online, and they must do so in the context of political polarization and so-called ideological "echo chambers" created by online media outlets and social media platforms. This chapter helps students develop strategies for distinguishing between fact and opinion and making appropriate inferences from reading material, whether academic or nonacademic.

Updated APA Documentation Guidelines and Student Essays

- Chapter 25, Citing Sources Using MLA Style, and Chapter 26, Citing Sources Using APA Style, each include new student research essays demonstrating proper source citation.
- Chapter 26 has been extensively revised to reflect the 2020 APA guidelines for documenting sources, including many new model citations and new digital examples to help students cite sources accurately.

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MindTap® English for Yagelski's *Writing: Ten Core Concepts,* 3rd Edition

MindTap® English engages your students to become better thinkers, communicators, and writers by blending your course materials with content that supports every aspect of the writing process. Interactive activities on grammar and mechanics promote application in student writing, and an easy-to-use paper management system allows for electronic submission, grading, and peer review while tracking potential plagiarism. A vast database of scholarly sources supports the research process, and professional tutoring guides students from rough drafts to polished writing. Visual analytics track student progress and engagement with seamless integration into your campus learning management system that keeps all your course materials in one place.

MindTap® English now comes equipped with the diagnostic-guided JUST IN TIME PLUS learning module for foundational concepts and embedded course support. The module features 43 distinct units, each containing scaffolded video tutorials, instructional text content, and auto-graded activities designed to address each student's specific needs for practice and support to succeed in college-level composition courses. MindTap® English also includes 50 Readings, a curated selection of readings organized in ten themes: Fake News on Social Media, Media Bias, The Value of College, Social Justice, Cultural Appropriation, Place and Identity, Nature and the Environment, Gender Identity, Writing about Writing, and Public Discourse. Each reading is accompanied by discussion questions and a short auto-graded reading quiz.

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Writing and Critical Inquiry at SUNY-Albany in fall 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Marcie and our terrific students in that class taught me more than I could ever describe about writing and teaching, and those lessons have shaped this new edition. Special thanks as well to Mrs. Kimberly Smith, administrative assistant extraordinaire for the WCI Program, whose diligence, unfailing dependability, and intelligence make my life immeasurably easier; I am truly grateful for her constant support and good humor.

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following instructors: Eugenia Badger, Indiana University; Rena Dossett, Ball State University; Kimberly Russell, Texas Women's University; Brianne Sardoni, Dallas College; Elizabeth Starr, Ivy Tech Community College; and Danielle Williams, Baylor University.

Finally, I am deeply grateful for the support of my family, which was especially important during the very challenging year (2020) when most of the work on this project was completed. In particular, I wish to express my love and gratitude to my mother, Joan Yagelski, and my siblings—Mary Cooper, Gary Yagelski, and Dianne Yagelski—whose love and pride in my work help sustain me. In early March of 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to rage in the United States, we lost Ronald Yagelski, my father, to a longstanding illness. His passing made a difficult year even harder to bear. I have dedicated this edition to his memory. I am blessed to have two families, one by marriage, and I wish to express my gratitude to my mother-in-law, Charlotte Hafich, who has always offered unconditional love and support as if I were her own son. And my own sons, Adam and Aaron, are an integral part of how I see the world; they enrich my life in profound ways that inevitably manifest in my writing, and it brings me such great joy to continue to be part of their lives. Most of all, Cheryl, my wife of 39 years and the love of my life, has never wavered in her love and support for me, no matter how difficult the times might become. She has been part of my professional journey from the beginning, and in that regard this textbook is as much hers as it is mine. I am so deeply blessed to be able to share this work—and my life—with her. She always provides safe harbor.

Robert P. Yagelski

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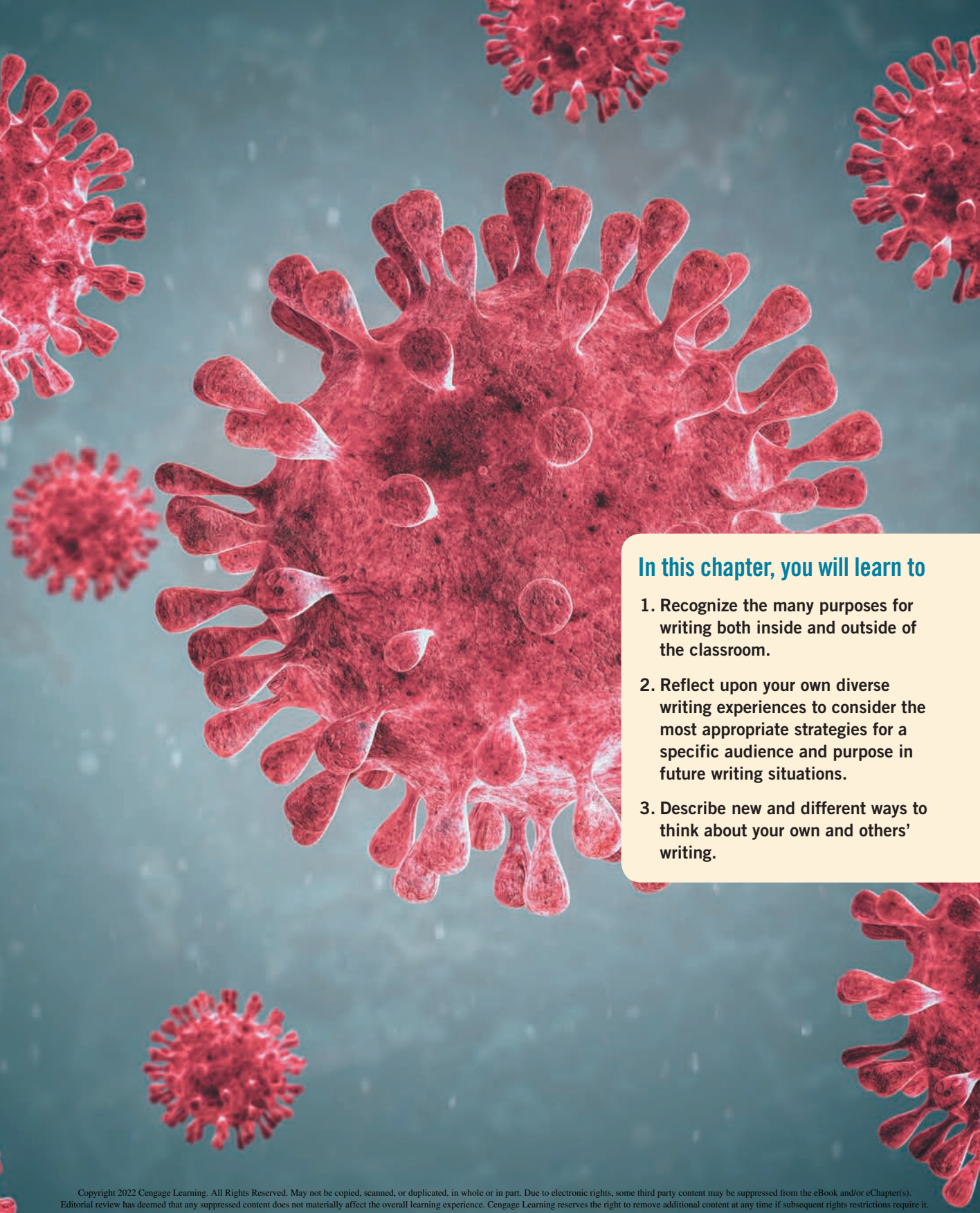

In this chapter, you will learn to

1. Recognize the many purposes for writing both inside and outside of the classroom.
2. Reflect upon your own diverse writing experiences to consider the most appropriate strategies for a specific audience and purpose in future writing situations.
3. Describe new and different ways to think about your own and others' writing.

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Why We Write 1

WRITING IS A POWERFUL MEANS of communicating ideas and information across time and space. It enables us to participate in conversations and events that shape our lives and helps us make sense of the world. In fact, writing can change the world. Consider these examples:

- *The Art of War*, believed to have been written in the 6th century B.C.E. by Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, is still widely read by military leaders, politicians, and business leaders.
- Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, revolutionized scientific thinking about life on earth and laid the foundation for the modern field of biology.
- Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, is considered by many to have begun the women's rights movement that has reshaped American social, cultural, political, and economic life in the past half century.
- Messages posted on Facebook and Twitter during the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011 helped provoke protests in Egypt and Tunisia that led to new governments in those nations.
- The writings of Swedish high school student Greta Thunberg on social media and elsewhere sparked a worldwide movement in 2018 to mobilize young people to pressure their governments for action on global climate change.
- The technical reports written and shared by thousands of scientists around the world during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic helped medical professionals understand the disease and save countless lives.

These are only the most dramatic examples of the capacity of writing to transform our world.

For many college students, however, writing is mostly a requirement. Most students don't seem to mind writing, but few would choose to write the kinds of essays and reports usually assigned in school. Students consider such assignments necessary, but they don't necessarily enjoy them. For many students, writing in school can be tedious and dull. Maybe you feel the same way.

Yet students write all the time, for all kinds of reasons:

- They send text messages, post to Instagram and Facebook, and tweet to stay in touch with friends, share information, let others know what they think, and keep informed about events or issues that matter to them.
- They respond to their favorite blogs or maintain their own blogs.
- They keep journals or diaries.
- They circulate petitions to support causes on their campus or in their town.

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- They rap and participate in poetry slams to express their feelings about important issues in their lives.
- They write essays to gain admission to college or graduate school.
- They create resumes to apply for jobs.

Whether they realize it or not, students regularly use writing to live their lives, to accomplish tasks that they have to do or choose to do, and to participate in their communities.

If these kinds of writing don't seem as important as, say, a book like *The Wealth of Nations* or *The Feminine Mystique*, they should, for if a book can be said to have changed the world, the same is true of tweets, texts, blogs, essays, and letters written by ordinary people, including students. A job application letter can change your life. A petition can change a policy on your campus that affects hundreds or thousands of students (see Sidebar: "How a Student Changed a College Policy on Free Speech"). An essay can inspire your classmates, change their minds about an issue, or move them to take action. A tweet or Instagram post can help spark a social or political movement. In 2013 a young woman from California named Alicia Garza posted a message on her Facebook page about the death of a young black man in Florida named Trayvon Martin. Her message became the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which in turn became an important national movement that helped shape discussions about race relations in the United States and even influenced the presidential elections in 2016 and 2020. Sometimes such ordinary kinds of writing can result in extraordinary change even on the international level: in Egypt, in February, 2011, tweets, email messages, texts, blog posts, and Facebook entries from ordinary citizens played a key role in the protest movement that led to the resignation of Egypt's president, who had ruled that nation for more than three decades. In other words, writing by ordinary citizens helped change the government of that country—a change that has touched the life of every Egyptian and many people outside Egypt.

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SIDEBAR HOW A STUDENT CHANGED A COLLEGE POLICY ON FREE SPEECH

In September 2013, a student named Vincenzo Sinapi-Riddle at Citrus College in Glendora, California was soliciting signatures for a petition regarding the surveillance of American citizens by the U.S. government as part of its so-called "war on terror." Sinapi-Riddle was a member of a national student organization called Young Americans for Liberty, whose mission, according to the group's website, is "to identify, educate, train, and mobilize young people" who are committed to its Libertarian political views. As the following account reveals, Sinapi-Riddle was standing outside the student center on the Citrus College campus talking about his petition with another student when an administrator threatened to remove him from campus for violating the college's policy on free speech. Sinapi-Riddle was told that he was standing outside the designated area for protest and, therefore, could not continue advocating for his petition. With the help of an organization called the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, Sinapi-Riddle filed a lawsuit against Citrus College, arguing that the college's free speech policy violated students' constitutional right to free speech. He won his suit, and Citrus College revised its policy. As Sinapi-Riddle wrote on his blog, we "launched our initiative to raise awareness about warrantless government spying with great success. In the end we gathered over 300 signatures for our petition asking student government to denounce NSA spying, but in the process of protesting one egregious violation of our rights we stumbled upon another."

This case provides a compelling example of how students can use writing to effect change. Sinapi-Riddle and his fellow students in Young Americans for Liberty used writing to raise awareness about an issue (government surveillance of citizens) that concerned them, but writing was also an essential tool in the lawsuit against Citrus College. In addition to the various legal documents required in the case, Sinapi-Riddle used blog posts, social media, and news reports to support his position and take action against a policy that he believed was wrong.

Citrus College Stand Up for Speech Lawsuit

On September 17, 2013—Constitution Day—Citrus College (Glendora, California) student Vincenzo Sinapi-Riddle was threatened with removal from campus by an administrator for asking a fellow student to sign a petition protesting NSA surveillance of American citizens. His crime? Sinapi-Riddle was petitioning outside of the college's tiny "free speech area." Sinapi-Riddle is president of the Citrus College chapter of Young Americans for Liberty and is passionate about his political beliefs, but he has curtailed his expressive conduct on campus in light of this incident and Citrus College's speech-repressive policies. . . .

In addition to challenging Citrus College's "free speech area," which comprises just 1.37% of campus, Sinapi-Riddle is challenging two other policies: (1) the college's

(Continued)

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"verbal harassment policy," which prohibits a wide range of speech protected by the First Amendment, including "inappropriate or offensive remarks"; and (2) the college's elaborate permitting requirements for student group speech, which require student groups wishing to express themselves on campus to wait two weeks and obtain the permission of four separate college entities prior to doing so.

College That Suppressed Anti-NSA Petition Settles Lawsuit

LOS ANGELES, December 3, 2014—Today, Citrus College in California agreed to settle a student's free speech lawsuit for $110,000, marking the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education's (FIRE's) second victory for the First Amendment in 24 hours.

Student Vincenzo Sinapi-Riddle filed the federal lawsuit in July as part of FIRE's Stand Up For Speech Litigation Project. Sinapi-Riddle was threatened with removal from campus for soliciting signatures for a petition against domestic surveillance by the National Security Agency (NSA) outside of Citrus's tiny "free speech area."

In addition to the monetary settlement for Sinapi-Riddle's damages and attorneys' fees, Citrus has revised numerous policies, agreed not to impede free expression in all open areas of campus, and adopted a definition of harassment that complies with the First Amendment.

"Citrus College agreed to eliminate its restrictive 'free speech zone' in the face of a FIRE lawsuit back in 2003, but later reinstated its speech quarantine when it thought no one was watching," said FIRE President Greg Lukianoff. "But FIRE was watching, and we'll continue to do so. If the speech codes come back again, so will we."

To hold Citrus to today's settlement, the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California will retain jurisdiction over the case for one year, allowing Sinapi-Riddle to enforce the agreement without filing a new lawsuit.

The incident leading to the lawsuit took place on September 17, 2013—Constitution Day. Sinapi-Riddle had gone to Citrus's designated free speech area to collect signatures for a petition urging the college's student government to condemn the NSA's surveillance program. Then, as Sinapi-Riddle took a break to go to the student center, he began a discussion about the petition with another student. An administrator put a stop to the conversation, claiming that a political discussion could not take place outside of the free speech area and threatening to eject Sinapi-Riddle from campus for violating the policy.

In addition to restricting student free speech to an area comprising just 1.37 percent of the campus, Citrus maintained a lengthy approval process for registered student organizations seeking to engage in expressive activity. Sinapi-Riddle, president of Young Americans for Liberty at Citrus, had given up on organizing events because of a burdensome process that included review by four different college entities and a requirement of 14 days' advance notice. The process was so complex that the Student Handbook had to include a flowchart illustrating it.

The lawsuit against Citrus College was one of four suits filed on July 1, marking the public launch of FIRE's Stand Up For Speech Litigation Project. Attorneys Robert

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Corn-Revere, Ronald London, and Lisa Zycherman of the law firm Davis Wright Tremaine represented Sinapi-Riddle. FIRE has coordinated seven lawsuits to date, with more on the way. Citrus is the third that has been settled in favor of students' free speech rights; each of the remaining four suits is ongoing.

"I feel that free speech and the ability to express oneself freely is a very important right for all students," said Sinapi-Riddle. "I'm very grateful for FIRE's help in making sure that limitations on free speech are a thing of the past at Citrus College."

Sources: Citrus College Stand Up for Speech Lawsuit. *Foundation for Individual Rights in Education*, www.thefire.org/cases/citrus-college-stand-up-for-speech/

Second Victory in 24 Hours: College That Suppressed Anti-NSA Petition Settles Lawsuit. *Foundation for Individual Rights in Education*, 3 Dec. 2014, www.thefire.org/second-victory-24-hours-college-suppressed-anti-nsa-petition-settles-lawsuit/

Questions for Discussion

1. Identify the various ways in which writing was used in this case (e.g., petitions, social media). What role did each of these kinds of writing play? (You can visit the website of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education for more information about the case. Also, search the web for additional news reports.)
2. What do you think the uses of writing in this case reveal about writing as a tool for political action? Do you think Sinapi-Riddle and the other students involved in this case could have accomplished their goals without using writing as they did? Why or why not? What advantages (or disadvantages) do you see in the way students used writing in this situation? What alternatives did the students have?
3. Write a brief essay about a time when you used writing to voice a concern, lodge a complaint, or try to change something. Then, with a group of classmates, share your essays. What similarities and differences do you see in the writing that is described in these essays? What conclusions might you draw from these essays about the role of writing in your lives?

As a college student you will probably do most of your writing for your classes. This textbook will help you learn to manage college writing assignments effectively. But writing well can also help you live your life in ways that extend far beyond the classroom. So in this chapter—and throughout this textbook—we will examine some of the many different situations in which you might be asked to write.

Understanding Writing

This textbook has another important goal: to help you understand what writing is. One reason that so many people struggle with writing is that they don't sufficiently understand the nature of writing. They believe writing is a matter of following arcane rules that are often difficult to

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remember or grasp. They think writing is a result of inspiration and creativity, which they believe they lack, or they assume they can't write well because they don't have a large enough vocabulary. These beliefs are based on common misconceptions that can lead to frustration and prevent students from becoming successful writers. Yes, writing well *does* require knowing rules, and having a large vocabulary doesn't hurt. But writing is more than rules or inspiration or vocabulary. Writing should be understood in four important ways:

- Writing is a powerful means of expression and communication.
- Writing is a way to participate in ongoing conversations about ideas, events, and issues that matter in our lives.
- Writing is a unique form of thinking that helps us learn.
- Writing is a way to understand ourselves and the world around us.

For students who come to understand writing in these four ways, learning to write effectively can be a much more satisfying and successful process. *Abandoning common misconceptions and appreciating the complexity, power, and joy of writing are the first steps to learning to write well and feeling confident about writing*. This textbook will introduce you to the most important ideas—the Core Concepts—that you need to know in order to write well. It is also designed to give you practice in the most common forms of writing for a variety of audiences and purposes—in college, in your community, in the workplace, and in your life in general.

FOCUS **THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOUR WRITING**

What were the most important pieces of writing you have ever done in your life? Under what circumstances did you write them? What form did they take (e.g., were they conventional essays, letters, emails, Prezi presentations?) Why were they important? In what ways did they affect your life? What do these pieces of writing suggest about the role of writing in your life? Jot down brief answers to these questions and consider what your answers reveal about the role of writing in your life. You might do many kinds of important writing without really being aware of them.

Writing in College

Let's face it, students have to write well if they expect to do well in school. Whether it's a lab report in a biology class, a research paper in a sociology course, a proposal in a business class, or a literary analysis essay in an English course, writing effectively means better learning and better grades. In this regard, **writing in college serves three main purposes**:

- It is a way for you to demonstrate what you know.
- It helps you learn.
- It enables you to join important conversations about the subjects you are studying.

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Write to Demonstrate What You Know

Writing is a way for you to show your instructors what you have learned. An essay exam in history, for example, helps your instructor decide whether you have understood a particular concept (say, manifest destiny) or learned about historical events that are part of the course syllabus. Similarly, your economics professor might assign an essay requiring you to analyze a market trend, such as the use of social media for product placement, to determine whether you and your classmates have grasped certain economic principles. For this reason, college students are asked to produce many different kinds of assignments: reports, research papers, analytical essays, arguments, synopses, creative writing (such as poems), personal narratives, reflective essays, multimedia presentations, and more.

FOCUS **THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOUR WRITING**

Think about a recent essay exam or assignment that you wrote for one of your classes. First, describe the writing you did. What was the assignment? What exactly did you write? What do you think was most important about that piece of writing? What did it reveal about what you know about the subject? What do you think it suggests about you as a writer?

When writing essay exams, reports, or research papers for your classes, keep in mind that you are writing to demonstrate what you have learned. Have confidence that your writing reflects what you know. And remember that your writing can also help you identify what you still need to learn.

Write to Learn

Writing an essay exam or a research paper isn't just a way to demonstrate learning; it is also a means of learning in itself. As you will see in the next chapter, writing is a form of intellectual inquiry, and it is essential to student learning, no matter the subject. To write an ethnographic analysis of a culture for an anthropology class, for example, is to learn not only about that culture but also about ethnography as a way of understanding how we live together. It's true that students can learn a great deal by reading, but writing engages the mind in ways that reading does not. Reading about ethnography can help students understand what ethnography is; writing an ethnographic report about a culture enables students to *apply* that understanding, which can lead to a deeper learning of the subject matter.

This idea that writing is learning can be easy to forget when you are trying to meet deadlines and follow detailed guidelines for an assignment. But if you approach your writing assignments as a way to learn about your subject matter, the process of writing can be more satisfying and can lead to more effective essays. And remember that every writing assignment is also an opportunity to learn about writing itself. The more you write, the better you understand the power and joy of writing and the better able you will be to meet the challenges of writing.

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