

Redesigning the Research Essay

AI Intensive, York University Teaching Commons

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WRIT1001H: Write in Time

- Trent's first-year composition course
- I've taught it since 2014
- Average enrollment of 40-60, with tutorials capped at 20
- Historically culminates in a research essay requiring four scaffolded assignments:
 - Annotated bibliography
 - Essay outline
 - Essay draft
 - Final essay

Sample fabrication from student Annotated Bibliography, Fall 2024

McMurtry, Teaira. "Black Language and Anti-Racist Language Pedagogy: Embracing Linguistic Justice in the Classroom." *Education and Urban Society*, vol. 54, no. 6, 2022, pp. 743-760.

In this article, Teaira McMurtry is pledging allegiance to anti-racist language pedagogy for the integration of Black Language (BL) into teachers' frameworks of multilingualism, arguing that BL embodies Black culture and possesses its own linguistic rules and historical significance. It emphasizes the need for educators to confront their biases against BL to promote inclusive and anti-racist teaching practices, fostering Black Linguistic Consciousness among students. The author provides examples of how recognizing and valuing BL can empower both teachers and students, recommending resources for further exploration and understanding of linguistic justice.

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New scaffolded assignments for the research essay, Fall 2025

OCTOBER 24 Annotated Bibliography (worth 5%) submitted online

OCTOBER 31 In-class reading exercise to “hack” one of the sources from the annotated bibliography (worth 8%)

- Students bring a hard copy of a peer-reviewed article they’ve found in the library e-resources

NOVEMBER 14 In-class outline for the research essay (worth 10%)

- Students have chosen an essay topic, but they receive the specific essay prompt in class on the day of the outline
- Students bring a hard copy of at least one outside peer-reviewed source related to their topic

NOVEMBER 21 (with option to continue on NOVEMBER 28) In-class essay writing (worth 20%)

- Using the outline from November 21, students prepare a full essay. They bring a hard copy of any outside sources they’ll cite, and they submit these with the completed essay, with quoted or paraphrased materials highlighted.

In-class assignment guidelines:

- All students receive **twice the standard amount of time** allotted.
- Students are **allowed to chat with classmates** as they work.
- Students **receive real-time feedback from their instructor/TA** as they work.
- Students are **encouraged to bring mood-boosting provisions (snacks, cookies, lattes, etc.)** to class.
- The only restriction is that the **assignments are completed without devices.**

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Article

Research Article Introductions as Hero Narratives: A Reading Strategy for Undergraduate Students

Jonathan Vroom

University of Toronto

WRIT1001H reading “hack” instructions

Question 1: Look for the place where the author(s) use the academic “hero narrative” move. Once you’ve found it, complete the following steps:

- **Quote or paraphrase the sentence/sentences where you see the authors**
 - **i) identifying a gap in the research and**
 - **ii) announcing their role as the heroes to address that gap.**
- **In one sentence, in your own words, explain the point of the article. What is it trying to study, prove, or argue?**

WRIT1001H reading “hack” instructions

Question 2: Look through the rest of the article and identify at least one section that looks especially useful for the purposes of your essay. (If the article has a Results or Discussion section, I suggest starting there.) Write down the following:

- **What is the section you’ve chosen? (If it has a subheading, write that down. If it doesn’t, explain the focus of the section in a few words.)**
- **What are the most relevant claims or findings in this section in relation to the essay topic you’ve chosen? Explain them using your own words in one or two sentences.**

Question 3: Does this article help deepen your thinking about the essay topic you’ve chosen? Can you see yourself using it in your essay? Why or why not? (One or two sentences will suffice here.)

Results

- Real-time formative feedback
 - Feedback arrives when students need it rather than after the fact
- Increased equity
 - Universal design allows everyone double the standard amount of time
 - Students have real-time access to instructors
 - Students have allotted time and space to complete high-stakes tasks
- Humanized learning
 - Writing involves real-time conversations with instructors and colleagues rather than fretful, solitary vigils at 3am

Thanks for listening!

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