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Out With the Old, In With Revitalized Grammar Through Style-based Composition Pedagogy

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OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH REVITALIZED GRAMMAR THROUGH
STYLE-BASED COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

BY

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Joel and Tamara, who have provided endless love

and support in all of my life's endeavors. "Thank you" is hardly a worthy expression.

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ABSTRACT

Composition theory has grappled with innumerable pedagogical approaches to grammar studies in the past, many of which yielded questionable results regarding improved clarity and effectiveness of student writing. Grammar is a primary component of spoken and written language; however, its teaching is often overlooked in many first-year writing classrooms. Composition instructors, then, are challenged to design an improved curriculum inclusive of grammar study through its reconciliation with style (Rankin, Amare), which would allow students to explore and experiment with a variety of rhetorical techniques in their compositions with significantly less severe mental detriments to their composing processes and attitudes. Facilitating style as the pedagogical lens from which to view and apply grammar studies, this project first examines various definitions of the related terms, then analyzes historical research on grammar instruction through style-based approaches, and finally, offers a sample assignment and questionnaire that surveys students' attitudes towards this type of assignment specifically crafted for a first-year writing course at Eastern Kentucky University. Scholarship of worthy academics, personal and primary research, and student responses presented multifaceted understandings about how students' prior knowledge and attitudes regarding grammar influence their efforts and confidences in the composing process, indicating that first-year writing instructors should revive grammar studies through the context of style in order to meet students' language needs and equip them with significant rhetorical and grammatical skills that serve to improve both their academic and professional goals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within the realm of composition theories remains fueled skepticism, debate, and often confusion for instructors concerning the incorporation of grammar studies into a first-year writing classroom. While many instructors and composition scholars view the study of grammar as inane, motiveless, or even convoluted, growing numbers are once again beginning to defend the merits of grammar instruction on the grounds that many students enter a first-year writing classroom exceedingly underprepared, having come from different socio-linguistic, educational, and grammatical backgrounds, essentially forming a linguistic melting pot. Often, the first-year writing instructors that abandon grammar do so in part because of high anxieties, confusion, or ignorance concerning how to gauge students' knowledge of grammar concepts. More often, those anxieties become coupled with teacher frustration on a suitable method to teach grammar-related topics that does not, in some way, involve traditional methods of recitation, monotonous drills or worksheets, and final assessments.

Upon entering graduate studies at Eastern Kentucky University, I discovered that grammar studies in the first-year writing classroom had been largely abandoned or discouraged. Instructors had long moved away from product pedagogy towards a more diversified and complex process pedagogy, one in which grammar played no strong role. Grammar received a demotion in importance on the college composition essay rubric, as

it was seen as a surface-level component of the composing process, one that had no real value as the measure of a successful compositionist.

Concerning the absence of grammar studies within a majority of first-year writing classrooms, the overarching goal for this project became to formulate a clear, cohesive stylistic assignment in which grammar concepts could be applied in drastically varied ways. I began researching more contemporary approaches that did not advocate formal lecture methods. One such approach neglected almost as frequently as grammar is *style*, the third of the five rhetorical canons termed by Aristotle. Stylistic choices employ grammar knowledge in order to create that style; therefore, grammatical studies in terms of spelling, punctuation, syntax, dialogue, and phonology, form an intersection between grammar and style as pedagogically useful. Through specific stylistic exercises such as sentence-combining and imitation, students learn how to create particular styles to affect an audience.

For the contexts and purposes of this project, I adhere to Nicole Amare's perceptions of grammar and style in "Style: The New Grammar in Composition Studies?" in which the former contains rules with preferences while style, on the other hand, affords choices with boundaries (153). Grammar rules are prescriptive in this sense because users of a language are taught that they must adhere to prescribed, standardized grammatical systems of construction in order to produce clear meaning. Obscuring and diversifying the prescriptions and conventions associated with grammar concepts, style emphasizes the descriptive aspect of writing by providing writers assurance that meaning can be expressed in grammatically appropriate ways even when those with prescriptive tendencies might not "prefer" that use. Paul Butler states in "Reconsidering the Teaching

of Style" that grammar connotes an ordinary use of language while style connotes its ordinary uses (77) since style promotes genre, convention, and language bending.

Typically when writers are introduced to grammar topics, they encounter language in isolation to a larger context. With grammar, there is no context until students employ memorization or trial-and-error techniques resulting in a tangible expression. Moving past the formalized approach, style is considered a more interesting, beneficial approach because it provides the context that coheres to the overall product. As students experiment with various techniques to suit different purposes, stylistic inquiry and practice intersect beautifully at the center of composition pedagogy as both process and product centered efforts.

Still yet, it seemed many first-year writing instructors are still missing a bigger portion of gap, one that, if left continually unaddressed, disenfranchises students not only of learning how to write more effectively and professionally, but, even more importantly, learning about how language can be manipulated to achieve a certain purpose when it properly adheres to or ignores grammatical conventions. How could we teach grammar through style in such a way that students are not asked to remember rules or respond to rote exercise practices? Specifically, I wanted to create an assignment in which students can write about themselves personally while simultaneously exploring and employing particular stylistic and grammatical concepts associated with academic writing. Though I had certainly acquired helpful responses to the grammar issue, I could not help but feel stuck pondering on the remaining part of the equation—what do the students think?

During one semester of graduate classes, the genre autocritography was introduced as a pedagogical approach to composition as a blending of authored text,

autobiographical moments, and critical thinking, theories, or themes. Beginning college

writers are seldom presented the opportunity to use their authentic experiences within the

composition classroom to inform or challenge designated texts. In this way,

autocritographical narrative and analysis can reside at the center of the first-year writing

classroom, thus providing instructors a more unique and suitable approach for students to

explore grammar through style-related practices. Style-based instruction not only favors

student interests, but student authenticity. Choosing a topic for an essay can often be the

most problematic aspect for students in composition; sometimes students may find it

easier to write from experience. This methodological approach would allow for—and

more importantly *encourage*—student-writer experimentation with different styles as

they relearn grammar content in a less scrutinizing context, and development of

individual voice and identity to spread across professional disciplines. Based on this

research, I chose to create such an assignment that blends certain stylistic and

autocritographical features in hopes that students can more successfully navigate the

ways in which grammatical structures demonstrate and develop a student writer's style.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

At a particular point in most secondary education institutions, teachers almost entirely abandon the study of grammar to turn to literature-based instruction accompanied by critical analysis. Instructors spend little time, if any, reviewing basic grammatical concepts as students move through each grade. While there is merit in teaching traditional literary analysis and open-response, many students who are recent high-school graduates come into first-year writing course exceedingly underprepared, which inherently, can problematize the identification and comprehension of language in its many spatial, aural, and visual forms. In this way, the study of grammar through style becomes a vital component for the critical thinking, listening, and metacognitive skills necessary to navigate the world not only inside and beyond the classroom and institutional environment. Some students tend to dislike the subject of grammar because they see it as rules that must be memorized and later judged through assessment. Scholars have already wrestled with the notion that traditional grammar instruction has remained insufficient in composition classrooms. However, diverse studies and texts have pointed to the shifting of pedagogy away from those former prescriptive standards to a much more inclusive, flexible, and self-expressive pedagogy of style-based grammar.

Invoking the Past: Grammar and Style's Turbulent Histories

A deeper look at grammar and style studies reveals the multifaceted histories that follow them within academic writing. As one of the leading and most challenged grammar scholars, Patrick Hartwell offers a historical framework in "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar" (1985) for the shift in grammar and its pedagogical usefulness in composition instruction. His contextual lens extends back to 1893 when the *Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies* noted that rigid, sequential grammar instruction did not aid correctness in writing, but instead had adverse effects on student compositions. Hartwell, according to Martha Kolln in "A Comment on Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar" "dramatizes" his argument (874-875) with his incorporation of superfluous language such as "harmful effects" and "magical thinking" while spending the majority of his time providing definitions that not only do not settle the grammar issue (875), but, even more surprisingly, do not hint at what it is, sending many instructors into panic over whether or not grammar should remain a formalized topic of composition studies.

Later, from the 1920s to the 1960s, when institutions turned a current-traditional pedagogical approach that operated on a product-driven agenda, students were most often asked to memorize, recall, and correct mistakes in drill-like assignments without ever being provided the opportunity to implement the learned concepts into their own writing. Citing Ingrid M. Strom's review of over fifty studies in the 1960s, Hartwell argues that grammar instruction centered on idea structuring, as opposed to proper recall of grammatical conventions, helped students more successfully develop essential

grammatical skills in sentence structure, usage, and punctuation (126) that, in turn, affect the overall quality of the composed text.

In 1963, Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell A. Schoer completed the formal Braddock Report, which appeared in *Research in Written Composition*. The conclusions of this report suggested that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible…even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" (37-38) as students faced continued anxiety over writing correctly and by the standard norm.

These recurring concerns stifled the student-writer/instructor dichotomy in the writing classroom until 1985 when the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) was prompted to follow in Hartwell's footsteps to draft the Resolution on Grammar Exercises to Teach Speaking and Writing. Providing background to address the issue, the council maintained teaching grammar in isolation does not aid in the development of student confidence towards writing; in fact, it is a strong deterrent. Students that lack confidence in their writing often lack maturity as well—maturity in regards to content, expression, and attitude. Joe Williams, following up on Hartwell's article with "Four Comments on Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar", notes that only mature writers will benefit from a style-based *unless*—and only unless—we "reformulate a separate grammar dedicated to teaching style" (642). In Williams's view, teaching the two topics together establishes a vocabulary that he deems crucial to talking about others' styles, but, moreover, *it just makes sense* in our twenty-first century paradigm when other educational terms such as literacy and composition have continually shifting definitions alongside grammar and style.

Given that the meanings of these terms change so rapidly, it should only be reasonable that composition instruction do the same at nearly the same rate. Ron Fortune's 1984 article "Style in Composition Research and Teaching" refers to an essay by Maxine Hairston, in which she mapped paradigm shifts in composition research for the previous fifteen years. The most significant of these paradigm shifts was that from current-traditional to process pedagogy, in other words, turning away from "finished texts" to the "processes through which writers produce texts" (508). However, Fortune argues that the finished product is not any less important especially where grammar is concerned; process pedagogy transforms the relationship among writer, reader, and text because it considers the individual, socio-political, and cultural, factors that inherently make up both the text and the individual's style when composing it. In fact, it is the style of the final product that acts as the catalyst for interest in the process by which a writer creates a product.

More recently, teacher-scholar Michelle Cleary agrees with these notions in the educational blog post "The Wrong Way to Teach Grammar" (2014) by expressing her argument blatantly: the old-fashioned way no longer works for current students as multiple studies from 1984, 2007, and 2012 have found. Her professional research included over 250 studies for students of all ages and intellects. Cleary largely agrees with much of Hartwell's negative historical commentary on the grammar issue in his popular text, and she takes her argument one step further by providing a theory for the gap between how students think, speak, and write. She explains that many students focus on correctness, from contractions to spelling, to paragraph structure, and in doing so, they remain victimized by a fallacious belief that grammar lessons should occur (or should

have occurred) prior to the physical act of writing, although writing, like any other skill, is a process best learned through continued, applied practice. When considering the use of style as a tool to teach grammar to a composition class, it is helpful to teach it as a process as well, one that students engage with continually, not as a form of assessment but as a reminder of the versatility and flexibility of language. Fortune writes that it is the shift towards process pedagogy that allowed writers to "develop a style" (509) through writing, advocating balance among all of the composing elements (of which style is one).

Within the shift towards process pedagogy, grammar declined rapidly due to its lackluster and isolated position in first-year composition instruction. Elizabeth D. Rankin offers two causes for the decline of style in "Revitalizing Style: Toward a New Theory and Pedagogy." She first suggests that the new paradigm promoted new interests, such as the role of invention in writing competing for attention with style. Another reason claims that the new paradigm does not provide a "sound, complete, adequate theory of style" (8) from which instructors should base their composition practices. Although she writes in 1985, her proposal for a new pedagogy of style echoes many recent scholars' plea for a theory inclusive of a workable definition of style (11), the recognition of psychological operations (such as problem-solving strategies) that accompany style choices (12), and finally, a solid grounding in consistent "philosophical and epistemological assumptions about the nature of language and reality," or, how language is relative, communal, and deterministic (12) in order to prove effective for teachers and students alike.

As Fortune writes, teaching grammar through style gives students "experience in solving the problems successful writers solve" by having them explore "dialectal relationship[s] between the process and product during composing" (508). While he does

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not view style as an inherent problem in the same respects that many scholars and students view grammar, he advocates that the manner in which both topics are defined, taught, and treated in academic discourse demands immediate change. Reinitiating instructor approaches to grammar through style is the necessary first step with the potential to transform students' personal and professional writing goals or practices.

Definitions and Connotations

In order to begin to understand how a stylistic approach to grammar might work effectively, some foreground knowledge must be established as to the varying definitions and relationships of grammar and style. Patrick Hartwell's five meanings of grammar in "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar" constitute different levels to help instructors choose which type is most suitable for a composition classroom. The first meaning of grammar involves the set of formal patterns where words in a language are arranged in order to convey larger meanings. For example, speakers know how to use some complex forms of language by the ages of five or six despite not having been taught the formal conventions. In other words, this meaning refers to the unconscious grammatical knowledge speakers possess but have no clear articulation for the reasoning behind that arrangement. Next, for the second definition of grammar, Hartwell looks to linguistic science that involves description, analysis, and formulization of formal language patterns that adhere to the long-rooted notion that grammar conventions existed before the coining of the term or standardization of arrangement. Linguistic etiquette is the third type of grammar, which mostly connotes usage. Usually, this definition is in mind when an individual refers to another as having "bad" or incorrect grammar. The fourth definition Hartwell acknowledges is referred to as school grammar, quite literally

meaning the grammar used within academia. In a first-year writing classroom, this might be referred to as the correct use of Standard English. Hartwell's fifth and final meaning is called stylistic grammar (110), or, the terms typically used in teaching prose style, according to Martha Kolln in "Closing the Books on Alchemy" (140). Instructors with romantic mindsets when it comes to writing and literature maintain that students must "struggle with and through language towards meaning" (Hartwell 124) while instructors leaning towards a classical paradigm view grammars as beneficial to helping developing writers with prose style since, to reiterate, students learn to control language mainly by manipulating it in meaningful contexts. Although Hartwell's definitions may appear outdated considering he composed in the mid-1980s, these five denotations establish a critical foundation for previous and contemporary research on grammar topics as it relates to the formal teaching of grammar in a first-year writing classroom.

Connotatively, Joyce Armstrong Carroll explains in *Acts of Teaching: How to Teach Writing: A Text, A Reader, A Narrative* that writers need to develop grammatical and critical writing skills on two levels. On the rhetorical level, students must learn to communicate in meaningful contexts through multiple and moldable "strategies, registers, and procedures, of discourse across a range of modes, audiences, contexts, and purposes" (311) to practice stylistic analysis. The second level constitutes a metalinguistic arena for students in which they are actively paying attention to the surface form of their compositions (Hartwell 125) by participating in any kind of language activity that embraces awareness of language as just that: language. The research of the leading grammar scholars suggests that repetitive style-based exercises in prescriptive processes serve only to exacerbate the issue of cultural capital, explained by Nicole

Amare as the idea that "what counts as style, what counts as valued written form, is part of and derives its meaning from a matrix of elements that comprise a given culture" (153-154) where one part of this matrix is the first-year composition classroom itself, which proposes and adheres to its own conventions and learning outcomes for different topics.

Based on her professional research, Amare postulates that stylistic (and even grammatical) conventions change depending on the class itself, assignments, and most importantly, professors' whims, which students then must navigate in order to be successful in the course. Style counters the issue of shifting grammar conventions for instructors since it allows students to explore the critical ways in which one uses language to reach and impress an audience rather than traditional grammar instruction, whose main audience *is* primarily the teacher. By asking students to visualize an audience that fits their purpose, they are engaging with style as they learn how "changing a word, choosing punctuation, or rearranging syntactical features in writing is done in respect to audience needs and expectations" (Amare 155). Jeff House furthers Amare's argument in "The Grammar Gallimaufry: Teaching Students to Challenge the Grammar Gods" by defining grammar as a set of rules that teaches students they are accountable for the ways in which they compose and how meaning is made based on that particular language construction. Adhering to the overarching theory of teaching grammar through style, House proposes that grammar is merely an expression of style that invites writers to explore creating a distinct voice. He suggests how the differences—both denotative and connotative—between grammatical and rhetorical rules underlay the need for dictionaries to update their versions every few years to balance prescriptivist and descriptivist appeals. Because grammar is typically perceived as a restriction on self-expression

through the limiting of syntactical structures, grammar incorporated within style instruction, on the other hand, provides a more expansive edge by allowing students to explore writing for varied purposes including conscious and purposeful manipulation of grammatical conventions.

Fortune cites Richard Larson's essay "Language Studies and Composing Processes" from *Territory of Language*, which provides another set of definitions for both composition terms. Larson refers to grammar as a description of relationships among units of language, in which certain rules and forms govern that relationship. Style, in a similar context, is a view of processes for composing language (217) on the premise that options to form cohesion and coherence are generative aspects of writing. Fortune views the acquisition of Larson's definitions as one of the necessary first steps in justifying grammar's relationship to style and the development of students' writing styles (516). Responding to the Louis Milic's "Theories of Style and Their Implications for the Teaching of Grammar", John Gage in "Philosophies of Style and Their Implications for Composition" provides an analogist definition, grammar, along with style, is viewed as a "system of perfectly ordered relations" reflective of the nature of universal systems. Anomalists on the other hand point out that language is anything but perfect due to the large number of irregularities that formed from the erratic nature of its development. Informing Larson's definitions, Fortune also references Louis Milic's 1965 "Theories of Style and Their Implications for Teaching Composition" for a frame to view style and help decide if, how, and when students should first encounter the topic.

Most English teachers readily recognize that even the most canonical of literature contains grammatical errors that may not be proper or desired in writing. Even then,

House asserts that how one teaches grammar depends on what he or she believes that it does (98). Referring once again to Amare's notion of cultural capital, she believes instructors owe it to their students to show them just how style is linked from the works of the classical rhetoricians to its current employment in the worlds of business and technical communication. During the time of Aristotle, he wrote extensively on how individuals can only understand persuasion if they are familiar or practice with the technical study of rhetoric, which calls for both analysis and implementation of stylistic as well as grammatical conventions (in other words, the visual and the auditory) to achieve success. In another of Paul Butler's essays, he suggest that students "can't write clean English sentences" (62) because they have not been taught what sentences are ("Style and the Public Intellectual: Rethinking Composition in the Public Sphere"). The first-year composition classroom is concerned primarily with "literacy, style, grammar, and usage" where style is of the utmost importance despite these concerns being frequently neglected or ignored within the classroom, leading to students acquiring an inaccurate portrayal of pedagogical thought (62). Butler initiates a "call to style" to address the aspects composition theory has previously neglected in order to articulate a clear position on the difficult-to-limit area of grammar.

In 1974, College Composition and Communication (CCCC) stated in "Students' Rights to Their Own Language" that students have the rights to and to express "the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style" (68). In making this claim, CCCC notes that it is left to instructors to convince students that spelling, punctuation, and usage are not as crucial as content, even if they are important:

In every composition class there are examples of writing which are clear

and vigorous despite the use of non-standard forms…and there are

certainly many examples of limp, vapid writing in 'standard dialect…It

seems evident, then, that if composition as a field embraces the idea of

difference in various dialects, that idea is inextricably linked to the idea of

variation as a fundamental aspect of style (69).

By declaring their rights to their own language, students opt to develop a

"personal style: the idea that language is most clearly evident in the way it is

taken up by each person; the principle of variation; and ultimately, the concept of

diversity" (108). Like diversity, Butler notes in "Style in the Diaspora of

Composition Studies" variation from a norm, coupled with the juxtaposition of

variation and normalization in language is what *creates* a certain written style.

Butler's response to this idea illustrates how the centrality of content-based

composition pedagogy might prove one avenue of the resistance to style, while

the statement from CCCC proves that the utilization of such an approach towards

content and process (involving style as the basis for grammar) is, in and of itself,

a call to style—to redefine, re-popularize, and rework stylistic analysis and

exercises into the field of composition.

Previous research indicates how grammar refers to language's syntactic

framework while style is the set of constructs (like the em-dash or parentheses) that make

grammatical sentences easier to understand or perhaps simply more interesting to read.

Grammar is most often viewed as what the writer does while style describes the "how to"

process behind a certain action in the composing process. While many scholars, critics,

and students refer to grammar as rules with an end goal of sounding correct, style is more preferably viewed as having varied options with boundaries since in manipulating grammatical elements (Amare 155). The main purpose of style instruction is to instill less fear and loathing towards grammar concepts by incorporating a more creative aspect for student writing instead of approaching both topics in dreadfully boring methods of traditional exercises. When the focus of grammar points towards style studies, the new connotation towards the latter emphasizes the how and why of the transmission of ideas from thoughts onto a physical medium, which can be visual (written, digital, or imagistic), aural, or something else entirely.

Approaching Grammar Topics Through Style

Multiple scholars have written about their successes and failures in regards to teaching grammar-related content through a style-based pedagogy. As mentioned, the major questions asked by Patrick Hartwell in 1985 share overlaps with teacher and scholar concerns today. He wonders, first, why grammar has been at the head of writing research and discussion for over seventy-five years considering its isolation or neglect within the first-year writing classroom. In correlation to this question, he speculates which definitions we need to recognize the issue and articulate its resolution intelligibly. Finally, he considers what findings in cognate disciplines suggest about the value of teaching formal grammar instruction as such.

Before Hartwell's time, however, as early as 1971, other scholars like Frank D'Angelo began advocating a reanimation of style within composition studies. In his essay "Imitation and Style," he discusses how imitation of other

writers is particularly beneficial for first-year writing students. In his view, instructors need to scaffold assignments that follow a specific pattern, which also build on each predetermining step to expand knowledge on a particular learning outcome or compositional concept. For instance, D'Angelo insists a necessary first step should consist of a preliminary reading of a model text, followed by careful textual analysis in which students formulate their own interpretations. Finally, students would be asked to partake in a close imitation exercise of their own creation (285). Nicole Amare justifies D'Angelo's steps for this process by affirming that imitation presents the opportunity to enhance students' composing processes by helping them combine multiple facts and details with fewer generalizations, improving the overall quality of the finished work (157). With roots in classical rhetoric in the times of Quintilian and Cicero, imitation as practiced based on the excellent models illustrates just how to employ and manipulate language to serve a certain purpose.

Given the notion that students' compositions are choice-related when writing, Edward P.J. Corbett's efforts in another essay, "Teaching Style," offer suggestive information on specific practices regarding diction, sentence patterns, figures of speech, and paragraphing in precise detail, which all create the potential to more succinctly engage students with varied language practices and conventions. Corbett advises that sentence-combining exercises in particular are useful for first-year writing students since the focus remains on the generative aspects of drafting, such as internalization and sentence synthesis (243). As students move from sentence to the next, the analytical goal is to "expose the

strengths (and sometimes the weaknesses) in selection, structure, and style" (245) in a text. This careful analysis helps teach students not only how to write more clearly and effectively, but also why some styles for composing may be preferred over others. Likewise, students typically end up discovering that many of their favorite writers, movie directors, and musical artists play with style and grammar rules to help them achieve their purpose. In order to steer students towards these discoveries, Michelle Cleary advocates that writing curriculum must include revising and editing strategies containing lessons directly applicable to students' lives and their writing; the freedom to play with sentences, words, and voices; and of course, the need to stop focusing on always sounding correct. By intersecting academic writing outcomes with personal interests in a freshman composition classroom, students gain more motivation and confidence to experiment with these resources in their own compositions. Appealing to student interests also helps to boost the desire to try different forms of writing and incorporate their own personalities.

Once students have had proper introductions to these types of classroom practices, they begin to learn more about the other overlapping areas between grammar and style: emphasis on introductory sentences, cohesion, and even varieties of the use of passive voice. Paul Butler's extensive commentary in "Reconsidering the Teaching of Style" states sentences have rhythm and patterns of emphasis that begin with the introduction in a trickle-down effect that sets up the organization of the rest of the text. Butler advocates using short introductory phrases at the beginning of a sentence and deliberately choosing words that

prepare the reader for what is to come next. Sentence-combining techniques can improve the flow of writing and the overall cohesiveness of a text. One way to ensure cohesion is to help writers blend old and new information, often referred to as the "known-new" or "given-and-new" approach (Butler 78). Pursuing cohesion as an aspect of style, William Strong in "Linguistics and writing" looks at sentence combining as a way to provide students better control over syntax and coherence, not simply just to create longer sentences.

In some cases, longer sentences do not guarantee clarity or efficiency when attempting to connect syntactical ideas. Richard Larson, like Butler and Amare, also advocates sentence-combining as instruction in cohesion. He insists that the necessary first step in explaining the relationship between style and the development of students' own writing styles is grounded in the generative aspects of writing process and pedagogy. Louis Milic also concludes that teachers should redesign heir courses "around a regimen of extensive writing and revision, and a study of stylistics with attention to grammar, [the sentence matrix], and of paragraph design" (523) given that both the sentence and paragraph structures are foundational to composition and grammar pedagogy. To these ends, Rankin believes in the potential of style pedagogy for the first-year writing classroom as both a product and process, as it involves a "set of observable features of a finished text and a way of discovering what the text will become" (12). The researchers agree that imitation and sentence-combining exercises are the best practices for beginning writers since grammar is included in the reading and

composition process as part of the conscious *and* unconscious stylistic and grammatical decisions that produce the overarching expression.

One of the primary drawbacks to this practice is its tight parallelism to plagiarism due to its potential to harm or prevent individual expression (Amare 156). Despite this, imitation exercises in a composition classroom illustrate how different authors use style as a crucial means of influencing an audience by allowing students to better "internalize the word of others" (Corbett 81) through discovering how "changing a word, choosing punctuation, or rearranging syntactical structures…is done with respect to audience needs and expectations rather than from obedience to abstract grammar rules" (Amare 160). In this way, students come to view their writing as based on choices regarding words and sentence structure that impact their audience as well as genre suitability, as opposed to the rules or conventions of language.

The Comingling of Style and Narrative

One of the most rewarding narrative genres that lends itself to various explorations of style is autocritography. As mentioned in the Introduction, the autocritographical genre surfaced during the Civil Rights Movement but has been gaining pedagogical popularity since the 1990s. With its obvious connections to autobiography, memoir, and personal narrative, autocritographical writing tends to be more personalized for stylistic experimentation. In *Scenes of Instruction: A Memoir* (1999), Michael Awkward offers a comprehensive, working definition of autocritography—"a self-reflexive, self-consciously academic act that foregrounds aspects of the genre typically dissolved into author's always strategic

self-portraits" through accounts of "individual, social, and institutional conditions" (7). The versatility of the autocritographical genre as a lens to implement style and grammar studies while also acknowledging the intersections between personal experience and academic writing demonstrates its reflexive, cathartic potentials in a first-year writing classroom. In Scott Neumeister's "We're All Passing (for Better or for Worse?)," he attempts to prove how autocritography as a pedagogy can embody these areas of writing concern through these conscientious acts:

> *Re*visiting past experiences, *re*membering them in terms of *re*articulating them with a critically conscious eye, self-*re*flection and *reflexivity*—the *re-* in all of these words means 'again,' a turning around to see what is p-a-s-t and that perhaps we have p-a-s-s-e-d while we were trying to meet some standard that is not who we really are (30).

Jerome Bruner proposes in his critical essay "Life as Narrative" that not only narrative is essential to life, but, also paradoxically, *life* is essential to the narrative. He affirms that the process of constructing narrative contains "the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life" where, in the end, "we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives" (15). In this sense, the author not only shapes the writing, but the writing, in turn, shapes the writer in addition to others' perceptions of the writer and message. Memories are sacred placeholders that map out our lives; student writers must tinker with grammar and stylistic options in order to both preserve and illuminate those memories to their

readers. Although autocritography is a critical analysis, it is also a story. The narrative portion of autocritographical compositions informs the analysis of the literature at hand. In this way, autocritography is comparable to autoethnography, which links reflection, memoir, or personal experience to larger socio-political or cultural notions or structures.

Utilizing the most appropriate and relevant texts to decipher grammatical and stylistic content as well as consistent practice with autocritography provided Neumeister with his life lens and life mission, which maintains that autocritography demands more scholarly and academic attention in a first-year composition classroom as the students enrolled in these courses possess diverse culture, history, and individuality—in other words, styles—waiting to be expressed within the same typified writing course where all writers must compose coherently and effectively to succeed. As Neumeister so delicately conveys, texts must be chosen with care and consideration to cultures; instructors of first-year-writing and beyond might choose this genre because of its adaptability and versatility in sharing knowledge of different cultures and peoples, which can then still be related to the writers' experiences as they may discover new knowledge that leads to a new consciousness. In doing so, students will more feasibly come to the realization that, sometimes, the mold must be broken (along with grammar and language) to perceive the world in a new light.

CHAPTER 3

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Research for this extensive project began long before I had a clear

conception of it. During the spring semester of graduate courses in 2018, I

conducted interviews with the primary Grammar and Linguistics instructors

respectively at Eastern Kentucky University (See Appendix A) in an effort to

identify the challenges and benefits of a stylistic approach for grammar within

freshman composition, as well as to inform or transform the critical

understandings that resulted from this project. I first asked instructors if they

included a deliberate review of grammar in their composition classroom and to

provide reasoning as to why or why not. I also asked them to identify the topics

most crucial for a first-year writing classroom based on their experience (See

Figure 1). After receiving thorough feedback, I was correct in my assertion that

this controversial topic still facilitated the need for more discussion and

consideration within academia, especially the first-year composition classroom as

both instructors explain how many students do not recognize that their mistakes

are grammar-related as a result of a lack of education on these significant topics.

Grammar Instructor	Linguistics Instructor
Capitalization	Capitalization
Subject-verb agreement	Punctuation
Pronoun-antecedent argument (tricky cases)	Conjunctive adverbs
Common usage errors	Run-ons and sentence fragments
Punctuation	Transitions (coordinating and subordinating conjunctions)

Figure 1. Comparison Chart of Grammar Topics Included in English 101. This figure illustrates which topics are included and how they are introduced to the classroom in a sequential manner.

To catalyze this project, I used the English instructor and student body at Eastern Kentucky University to authentically survey the success rate of a particular assignment keyed on style-based grammar pedagogy for a first-year writing classroom based on gathering authentic student opinions on such a grammar-related assignment explored through a stylistic and autocritographical approach. I first invented the Astrology Narrative essay (See Appendix B) and Astrology Narrative Grading Rubric (See Appendix C), which asks students to research traits associated with their biological zodiac signs and to connect (or, in some cases, disconnect) those traits to a personal experience in a critical, academic manner. Upon conferring with an English 101 (first course in a two-course first-year writing sequence at Eastern Kentucky University) instructor, he agreed that the assignment and rubric format would comfortably suit the purposes and outcomes of the course.

After creating the assignment, I realized I would enjoy hearing how students respond to the essays so I could analyze the successes and failures of the

narrative essay to be more useful in future classrooms. To that end, I administered the Astrology Narrative Student Survey Questionnaire (See Appendix D) via the participating English 101 instructor with hopes of identifying student attitudes about certain kinds of writing assignments.

The Student Survey Questionnaire included five statements pertaining to the assignment and its results, to which students would respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree The first three statements regard student learning outcomes and objectives designed for the English 101 course that are reflected throughout this assignment, especially as it pertains to the acquisition of grammatical knowledge through stylistic analysis and craft within the autocritographical genre. Statement 4 prompted students to answer whether the significant skills and knowledge that resulted from this assignment impacted their future academic or personal goals through writing in this simplified version of the genre in order to explore style-based grammar approaches. Lastly, the fifth statement corresponds to their recommendation for use of the assignment in future English 101 courses at Eastern Kentucky University. All of the students in this section of English 101 were required to complete the essay as part of their overall grade corresponding to the syllabus and all students received the same Student Survey Questionnaire; however, responses to the survey remained on an anonymous and voluntary basis after completion of the essay. Out of fifteen students in the class, thirteen (86%) chose to respond.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the thirteen students who completed both the assignment and the student survey questionnaire, there exists much overlap in response rates to the first three statements. Statements 1 and 2 encourage students to respond to the clarity of the objectives of the assignment prompt as well as whether or not the assignment met those stated learning objectives, respectively. Approximately 92% of students in this first-year writing strongly agree that the objectives were clear and met based on the design of the assignment, while the rest of the students responded neutrally. Regarding statement 3, which asks students to determine the relevancy of the assignment to the course learning outcomes, 84.6% strongly agree, while 7.7% only slightly agree, and the last 7.7% remained neutral. Some possibilities for the differentiation in response rate might include socio-economic factors, such as students' personal, cultural, or academic interests and beliefs. For example, students with a religious background or affiliation may not attribute validity to utilizing horoscopes or astrological information to pave the direction of their lives. However, student motivation in responding to the essay prompt *and* student survey questionnaire lies within these multifaceted factors, which are of utmost consideration in designing autocritographical narratives as part of a grammar and style exploration, as students are asked to use those factors to critically engage with websites, text, and even self.

Nevertheless, out of the five statements, it is statements 4 and 5 that are most compelling and interesting for students to answer since each correlates to their individual reactions to the incorporated assignment. Response statements in these categories were met with positivity, as students largely characterized their experience with this assignment as beneficial towards their personal, educational, and even cultural perspectives about writing, style, and grammar-related topics (See Figure 2). In regards to statement 4 of the Student Survey Questionnaire, the data illustrates that 77% of students who responded strongly agreed that they developed considerable skills regarding grammar content through a stylistic craft approach; 15% of students slightly agreed; and lastly, the remaining 8% of the voluntary responses showed a neutral response, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they acquired new knowledge about different ways to approach grammar through writing. Responses to statement 5 illustrate that 92% of students who partook in the survey strongly recommended this assignment for first-year writing students in the future, while other 8% only slightly agree.

The participating instructor in this project sent me the thirteen voluntary graded sample rubrics, astrology narratives, and student responses to the survey questionnaire, with student names and other identifying information removed. Students *were* asked, however, to include the name of their astrological or zodiac sign. None of the student narratives received below an 83%, and the highest score was 100% (yay!).

Summary of Response Percentages to Student Survey Questionnaire

Statement	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Neutral	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Objectives for this assignment were clearly stated and defined in the prompt.	94%	4%	2%	0%	0%
2. This assignment met the stated learning goals for the essay prompt.	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3. This assignment (including readings) was relevant to the learning objectives of the course.	89%	8%	3%	0%	0%
4. This assignment helped me to develop or explore significant stylistic or grammatical skills to progress toward my academic and/or personal goals through writing.	77%	15%	8%	0%	0%
5. I would recommend the Astrology assignment for future first-year writing students.	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 2. Summary of Response Percentages to Student Survey Questionnaire. This figure illustrates the collective summation and percentages of the opinion- and reflection-based insights that resulted from completion of the Astrology Narrative.

When reviewing the student essays for content and style above all, yet still affording close attention to which grammar issues were the most prevalent

throughout each student's compositions, I recognized that many of the multifaceted errors that correlate to the Grammar and Linguistics Instructors' survey (See Figure 1) are the same ones that many of this project's references have discussed in detail in their scholarship, such as sentence structure and the parts of speech.

For example, a proficient Sagittarius's essay that scored an 84% still saw issues in spelling; capitalization; mechanics and usage; and punctuation and usage in the form of comma splices. While the content of the essay was loaded with keen stylistic choices that made the reading easy and effective, many of these issues are simple surface-level errors that might be due to a lack of proofreading. The Sagittarius's narrative and explanation portions are thorough, personal, and culturally influenced by his or her religion, but overall, nicely reflective of the driving thesis and purpose of the assignment. Scholars such as Fortune, Amare, and Butler emphasize the descriptive tendencies of language and writing over prescriptivist regulations and codes (527, 154, 80). This Sagittarius decided to use the numerated version of the number twenty-five as opposed to spelling it completely out; although this stylistic decision may not be reflective of prescriptive preferences in regards to numbers, it is idealistic for this writer whose sentences remain simple, cohesive, and clear in the portrayal of their narrative life experience.

In another student essay, an eloquent and sarcastic Virgo earned a distinguished 100%, rightfully so. Using superfluous language to describe his or

her zodiac sign's traits, this Virgo employed a debate-like style in which a questioning of the relativity and sustainability of astrology as a "subject" acted as the catalyst for the narration portion. The Virgo also engaged with multiple sources effectively, making sure not to leave any detail or thought unfinished, whether the author's own or the thought of someone else. The Virgo utilized autocritography (without having had a formal introduction to the genre beforehand) as the life's experience is used as the basis for the criticism and skepticism towards astrology.

In calculating the average scores of the thirteen students, the number came out to be 90.9, which, for all intents and purposes, will be rounded up to 91. Two students in the class, a Taurus and an unidentified sign received this score for their essays. The Taurus, like the Virgo, applied a conversation-like style in which the individual critically reflected on his or her own careful considerations and thoughts about astrology after researching traits assigned to this particular sign. Although the introduction begins with a complete sentence, it contains an in-text citation placed at the end with a parenthetical clause, which some teachers or scholars might profess as a violation of standards concerning introduction hooks. To counter this issue, instructors might ask students to complete an activity involving different instances of deductive versus inductive reasoning to help students decide if they should approach the essay topic from the cloud of generalizations or observations to reach their conclusions. Similar to the other unidentified student who earned the other calculated average grade, both

individuals' compositions featured standard grammar issues pertaining to spelling, punctuation, source formatting, and attunement with a unique style.

In the case of the unknown sign, this student appeared to struggle with consistency in style as the entire piece felt more like a memoir than a critical autobiography with engaged analysis. The remaining students' compositions held few, if any, grammar-related or stylistically scrutinized errors. The majority of students in this first-year writing section also fused together effectively their personal memories with the proving or disproving of horoscopic traits.

Although the data pool is considerably small, based on response rates, the results of this student survey questionnaire suggest that students benefitted more from this type of autocritographical approach to grammar and style, as opposed to formal grammar instruction, considering that their individual *life* styles help to dictate what exactly their *writing* style might look like, as well as how those individual style choices help to inform or vary the overall coherence, structure, and grammatical content of the autocritographical essay. As claimed by much of the literature and research surrounding grammar and style pedagogical approaches, like those that Fortune, Amare, and Butler recommend, these results were both beneficial and applicable for students' composing processes and skill development as they carefully considered each stylistic and grammatical choice to achieve their desired purposes.

Even so, I am still convinced that instructors need to readdress the roles and purposes of stylistic grammar instruction through an autocritographical lens within the first-year writing classroom as students gained and employed certain

knowledge through the combination of both types of instruction as opposed to teaching either in isolation. Although it is certainly true that autocritography was invented to tackle substantial issues regarding oppression in relation to race, gender, and sexuality, this genre works exceptionally well as a genuine form of self-engagement and reflection, and, as some of the student essays propose, a sense of catharsis for issues not directly relating to societal oppression. Despite its currently underutilized status within academia, there is merit in anchoring autocritography and style as the basis of grammar studies as they have the potential to reshape the ways in which students are taught writing concepts and conventions, but also—and more significantly—the ways in which students are taught to think and communicate about the world.

Furthermore, autocritography presents both students and teachers the opportunity to exchange roles associated with both occupations as students bring to fruition newer, more innovative insights and connections about the world, which have the power to move audiences and transform reality, even when both prospects might appear lengthy, unendurable efforts. When reading books for leisure, individuals unconsciously inform their understandings and interpretations of the book based on prior knowledge, cognition, critical thinking, inference, and relation to personal experiences (whether the text is fiction, non-fiction, or a mix of both). If a reader is able to establish a personal connection with a text, that text becomes transformed in the mind of the reader to be adaptable to certain contexts, which may or may not exist in the reader's reality, yet has the capability of transforming the real reality either by the reader creating a relatable composition

or internalizing those meanings to be expressed in their daily lives. These internalizations arise from the social, political, ethnographic, and ideological frameworks that govern our understandings of the world.

Instructors continually ask students to undertake unfamiliar concepts or produce an original idea without considering how their individual life experiences intersect with those analytical insights. However, traditional writing assignments do not call for an examination of self and experience; the writer focuses on the argument without even being presented the chance to think about himself or herself. In asking students to produce compositions, each crafted with keen awareness to a particular style that is uniquely their own, there is the high potential for valuable, cumulative gain of stylistic and grammatical knowledge that may be carried within and throughout academic disciplines, or beyond.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This project was catalyzed by the crucial need for instructors to revitalize grammar instruction in new and profound ways. Students enter a first-year writing classroom with predetermined grammar knowledge that becomes vulnerable over time to decay or continued misuse if not embraced and explored at the beginning of their post-secondary education. Beyond the college classroom, students will take on tasks such as writing letters, constructing resumes, signing legal and informative documents, all important facets of composition that utilize grammar outside of the composition classroom. Based on the results of this project, offering a non-traditional grammar assignment infused with features from the genre autocritography and a stylistic focus allowed these first-year writing students to feel more comfortable and confident in sampling different stylistic and grammatical techniques as they begin to develop their individual writing styles.

As student perceptions of grammar and style changed from this particular type of assignment, the ways in which I view grammar, style, student writing, and instructor approaches to grammar were also significantly and necessarily revitalized through the transformational insights gained through this project. Grammar is not adequately defined as a set of rules or conventions that must follow a standard pattern; it is a tool to be controlled, manipulated, and fitted to suit one's writing purposes. Style is the medium through which students learn to

use and defy grammar norms to compose more complex thoughts and develop academic insights. Adhering to rigid definitions and conceptions of these terms offers little incentive for students or instructors to foster a welcoming or proud attitude towards grammatical studies, perhaps even towards composing in general.

This project also revolutionized my perceptions of traditionally objective writing assignments. Traditional approaches to grammar instruction neither account nor provide validation for students' rights to their own language—and experiences—through which their writing styles are developed and articulated. Frequently used terminologies such as "grammar review" or "unit on grammar" are not only outdated but tend to deter students from the composing process entirely as their agonies are consumed by a misguided need to only write correctly as opposed to focusing compositional energies on stylistic content and structure of a text. Educators and teacher-scholars must be ever-conscious of the grammatical knowledge students already possess before entering a first-year writing classroom. That knowledge forms the basis for the style in which they compose. Instead of weekly quizzes over grammar topics, perhaps teachers would benefit more directly from administering autocritographical assignments and student survey questionnaires like the ones used in this project to identify grammatical gaps for the collective classroom as opposed to each individual student.

Providing students with an autocritographical approach to a first-year writing assignment allowed this first-year writing class to more openly explore their writing styles while simultaneously employing or discovering how grammatical concepts may be manipulated while suiting academic objectives.

This project demonstrates the willingness of students to transfuse personal experience with academic writing as they come to view the composition process and product as a product of authenticity, a truly individualized work. Assignments that restrict students' styles also restrict their grammatical capabilities for improvement. Allowing students ample opportunities to write (and write and write) through an autocritographical lens, students will continually be able to engage—and experiment—with critical grammar and stylistic concepts that may have previously haunted their authorial mentalities and capacities to help them become more self-aware, critical composers of stylistically diverse texts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pre-Study Instructor Interview Questions

Pre-Study Instructor Interview Questions

1. Do you implement a grammar review or study into your first-year writing course?

   Why or why not?

2. Which topics are of the most relevance in the first-year writing classroom?

Appendix B: Astrology Narrative Assignment for English 101

Astrology Narrative Assignment for English 101

Some say, "Who you are lies in the stars." These individuals refer to astrology, an area of study that examines and analyzes the movements and/or positions of the cosmos (on any given day or hour) and their adverse effects on humanity. If you've ever read a daily or weekly horoscope, you are already familiar with an important aspect of astrology. Now, it's time to see whether or not you believe…

<u>**Overview**</u>
For this assignment, you will:
- Use the Internet to look up traits about your zodiac sign using one (or more) of the following zodiac websites—
  - Horoscope.com
  - Astrofame.com
  - Astrostyle.com

  Note: (If you are unsure as to what your zodiac sign is, you can enter your birthday and find out on WhatIsMySign.net).

- Reflect on which traits are <u>***OR***</u> are not applicable in your own life or to your individual self
- Choose at *least* **2** specific memories or episodes that directly or oppositely relate to the traits of your given sign (You may also choose to do one of each for a total of 2)
- Compose an argument-driven narrative in which you tell *and* show explicitly how these pre-supposed traits are emphasized in your life
  - NOTE: You should not tell the *whole* story. Choose a specific memory and focus on one certain aspect of that memory that you believe exemplifies or does not exemplify the qualities associated with your zodiac sign.

<u>**Expectations and Requirements:**</u>
- Narrative format with storytelling techniques (e.g. 1st person point-of-view, detailed descriptions, action sequences, and dialogue if necessary)
- At *least* **2** specific memories or episodes
- Objective commentary on those episodes with in-text citations (including author name or website title)
- 1½ - 2 pages, double-spaced
- MLA Format (Works Cited should include the website(s) and any other sources you use to gather information about your sign)

The instructor of this course will evaluate this assignment based on the grading rubric provided.
In addition, after completing this assignment, you will voluntarily answer a questionnaire of no more than six questions about this assignment and its usefulness to you in this course and future writing endeavors.

<u>**Objectives/Learning Outcomes:**</u>
- This assignment is intended to provide you with experience in making a personalized argument based on secondary research through the use of information technology (**GE for ENG 101: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7**). A strong argument demands critical thinking skills (in this case, about past, present, and future) (**GE for ENG 101: 3, 4**) and extensive reflection. In addition, this essay will familiarize you with the narrative essay (**GE for ENG 101: 7, 8**) as well as the incorporation of a driving thesis or stance on which you base your argument (**GE for ENG 101: 5**).

Appendix C: Astrology Narrative Grading Rubric

Astrology Narrative Grading Rubric

Introduction: **_____/15**
- The introduction contains an interesting hook for readers, which sets up the expected topic of the paper.
- The introduction should identify a clearly-articulated, opinionated thesis that illustrates how astrology is or is not connected to personal experiences.

Body Paragraphs (Narrative Portion):   **_____/25**
- Body paragraphs contain two identifiable memories or episodes
- Body paragraphs include 1st person point-of-view with storytelling or reflective techniques (i.e. – varied sentence style, dialogue, italics, etc.).

Body Paragraphs (Explanation Portion):   **_____/25**
- Each paragraph begins with an argumentative topic sentence that supports the thesis.
- Each paragraph contains the author name, article title, or website name to support the narrative body paragraphs. (For instance: if you use two different articles for two memories, you should name the source immediately after the narrative portion).
- Each example of evidence is followed by a response that privileges textual support over general assumptions. Hint: Use "This is significant because" to help formulate responses to evidence.

Conclusion: **_____/25**
- The conclusion should leave the reader with a "take-away" moment that illustrates the significance of this engagement.
- The conclusion should end in a way that returns the focus to the personal experience, since it is the "threshold" that formulated your insights about astrology.

Writing Conventions and MLA Documentation: **_____/10**
- The essay has been proofread to avoid surface errors. It is effectively written with little to no notable errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, or style. A consideration of audience and purpose are present.
- Direct quotes and/or paraphrased text are cited in MLA format. Sources are arranged alphabetically on the MLA Works Cited page at the end of the essay.

Appendix D: Astrology Narrative Student Survey Questionnaire

Astrology Narrative Student Survey Questionnaire

This survey is an opportunity to help your instructor (and a graduate student who wishes to become an instructor) design future classes and assignments to accommodate students' needs.

All responses are accepted anonymously and on a voluntary basis. If you do not wish to participate, please write "NO RESPONSES" at the bottom of this page. **Responses WILL NOT affect your class grade** and will only be discussed objectively by your instructor and the student who implemented this assignment as part of data collection for the Master's thesis document and to further the development of future ENG 101 courses.

For the following statements, please checkmark the corresponding opinion to the degree to which you agree or disagree. For the last two questions, there is allotted space for any necessary comments you wish to make about the purposes of this assignment. (Feedback would be most helpful!)

1. Objectives for this assignment were clearly stated and defined in the prompt.

Strongly Agree ☐	Slightly Agree ☐	Neutral ☐	Slightly Disagree ☐	Strongly Disagree ☐

2. This assignment met the stated learning goals for the essay prompt.

Strongly Agree ☐	Slightly Agree ☐	Neutral ☐	Slightly Disagree ☐	Strongly Disagree ☐

3. This assignment (including readings) was relevant to the learning objectives of the course.

Strongly Agree ☐	Slightly Agree ☐	Neutral ☐	Slightly Disagree ☐	Strongly Disagree ☐

4. This assignment helped me to develop or explore significant stylistic or grammatical skills to progress toward my academic and/or personal goals through writing.

Strongly Agree ☐	Slightly Agree ☐	Neutral ☐	Slightly Disagree ☐	Strongly Disagree ☐

Comments:

5. I would recommend the Astrology assignment for future first-year writing students.

Strongly Agree ☐	Slightly Agree ☐	Neutral ☐	Slightly Disagree ☐	Strongly Disagree ☐

Comments: