

JOHN S. KNIGHT INSTITUTE FOR WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES
WRITING 7100: TEACHING WRITING
Fall 2009

Course Description

Writing 7100 prepares new instructors of Cornell's First-Year Writing Seminars to teach courses that both introduce students to particular fields of study and help them develop the sophisticated writing skills they will need throughout their undergraduate careers. Seminar discussions and readings on pedagogical theories and practices provide an overview of the teaching of writing within a disciplinary context. Participants develop written assignments designed to be used in their own First-Year Writing Seminars.

Writing 7100 Instructors

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Course Rationale

Writing 7100 has three purposes, the first theoretical, the second two practical. First, we want to introduce you to the challenges of teaching First-Year Writing Seminars with a disciplinary focus. Second, we want you to leave the course with an advanced draft of a syllabus and a selection of assignments you can use in your First-Year Writing Seminar. Because reflection on the learning process facilitates learning, we ask you to include rationales in the assignments you draft for this class and encourage you to share versions of these rationales with your students. Third, we hope this seminar will be a laboratory in learning and teaching. In this seminar we try to model effective teaching methods; we encourage you to experiment with strategies and techniques you can use in your own seminars.

Most American universities require students to take one or more introductory writing courses. At many universities, these courses are taught exclusively within English departments, often by graduate students or adjunct faculty members. Others are taught in stand-alone writing programs, often by faculty members with temporary appointments. Cornell was one of the earliest universities to institute a Writing in the Disciplines model, in which writing courses, taught by faculty and graduate students, introduce students to the university by teaching writing within academic disciplines.

The guidelines for First-Year Writing Seminars (included in *The Indispensable Reference*) represent practical manifestations of a philosophy about teaching writing. Writing should be the central activity of each course—a substantial amount of class time should be devoted to it. Therefore, we require a certain number of assigned papers and place limits on the amount of reading assigned each week. Writing is best taught and practiced as a process. Therefore, we require guided revision and encourage preparatory writing and sequenced assignments. Writing Seminars succeed when they help build communities of writers. We hope this course will help build communities of teachers. Sharing assignments with other teachers and, we hope, learning from the work they plan for their own courses will be among the central tasks of Writing 7100.

Meeting Times

Please note: our first meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 26, the evening before regular classes begin. We then meet on Wednesdays from September 2–September 30. All meetings will be from 7 – 9:15 pm. Most of this time will be spent in seminar-sized sections led by a faculty member and an experienced graduate student instructor. You will receive your section assignment at the May 5 orientation.

Writing Assignments

These assignments should help you develop a semester-long plan for your seminar, draft individual assignments, and prepare detailed plans for at least four weeks of teaching. Because these assignments are intended to help you build your course, we encourage you to think of each week's assignment as part of a cumulative sequence, portions of which you may choose to revise over the course of the summer.

Assignment Rationales

We ask you to include a rationale with each assignment both to open a discussion with those who read and respond to your assignments and to prepare you for discussions with your future students. The rationale is a

place to write about your goals for a particular assignment and locate it within the work of the course. Most of the sample assignments available through our Archive of Teaching Materials include rationales. No assignment will be considered complete without a rationale.

The assignments below ask that you should submit your assignments via Blackboard for your section. Your seminar leaders may request that you submit them some other way, such as through email.

First assignment and Preliminary Conference

The first assignment is due on Monday, August 24, two days before our first class meeting. If you are teaching in the fall, please submit this assignment to your section leader for review in an individual conference *before* the first meeting of Writing 7100. This meeting will allow you to get feedback from an experienced instructor as you prepare for the semester's first weeks. You are responsible for contacting the leader of your W7100 discussion section to arrange a meeting.

Peer Collaboration

We will often ask you to share assignments and exchange comments with classmates before or during class meetings. We will frequently ask you to exchange copies of assignments with partners and your instructors by email or through Blackboard no later than the day before the class meets. In these cases, you should read your partners' assignments carefully as part of your preparation for the class. (Your instructors will provide more detailed information). Class time will regularly be devoted to meeting with peers to review the draft assignments you've produced. Your instructors will participate in these discussions in addition to responding to your assignments in writing or in face-to-face conversations.

Presentations

Your facilitators may assign various kinds of presentations. In First-Year Writing Seminars, presentations help students become active learners and active participants in the course. They can also be useful stages in the writing process. In Writing 7100, presentations provide opportunities to experiment with classroom activities you may use in your own courses. They may also provide you with opportunities to "test drive" assignments by leading a part of the class and receiving feedback from your colleagues.

Reading Assignments

Assigned readings come from the following texts, distributed at orientation. In addition to providing both theoretical and practical support as you plan your First-Year Writing Seminar, these texts are intended to be resources as you continue your teaching career. We will read only one of these texts in full this summer. We will assign or recommend articles or sections from the others, and suggest you read around on your own this summer or in the future. Your instructors may suggest other readings in addition to the items listed on the weekly schedule.

We try to provide you with a range of materials that you may find helpful over the course of your teaching career. You may find that some of this reading will make more sense after you have begun teaching; or when you are preparing to teach a second time; or when you prepare for the academic job market.

- Keith Hjortshoj and Katy Gottschalk. *The Elements of Teaching Writing*
The Elements of Teaching Writing, the central text for this course, was written by Cornell writing faculty for teachers of courses like yours. Although we assign chapters for each week's meetings, you should at least scan the whole book before our first class meeting, especially if you are teaching in the fall.
- Keith Hjortshoj. *The Transition to College Writing*
The Transition to College Writing is the companion to *Elements*. Although its audience is students beginning their college careers, it helps frame the kinds of problems writing teachers are likely to face in helping high school students become college students.
- T. R. Johnson, ed. *Teaching Composition: Background Readings*
This anthology collects many of the most influential articles published in the field of composition during the last three decades. We will assign several articles and recommend several more. This should also be an excellent resource as you continue your career as a teacher of writing and of other subjects.
- Judith Pierpont. *Second Language Students in the Writing Class: A Manual for Instructors*
Written by a member of the Writing workshop and who is a specialist in teaching students whose first language is not English, *Second Language Students* is a practical guide to helping you work with international students and later bilinguals.
- Some essays are available through the Archive of Teaching Materials (see below).

Please note: the reading is heaviest before the first class meeting. This is because you have the whole summer to prepare.

Archive of Teaching Materials: sample syllabi, assignments, and exercises

We have built a web-based archive of teaching materials created by Cornell instructors. Many of these materials have won Knight Institute prizes. Use the link “Archive of Teaching Materials” at the Knight Institute’s home page to access this site (http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/).

Assignments do not always make for easy reading. However, you can learn a great deal from the successes and experiments of others. We recommend that you browse and study examples *throughout the course, both before and after you draft assignments*. Keep them in mind as you finalize your own course materials. You may, of course, find it useful to browse among these samples throughout the year.

Attendance: Attendance at all six seminar meetings is required. Timely submission of all assignments is required. Successful completion of the course is required of all instructors who wish to continue teaching in the Writing Program. Writing 7100 is a one-credit, S/U only course.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

Teaching Writing in a Discipline: What is it? Why do it?

You will be teaching a course that is supposed to introduce students both to the demands of writing in the university and to the thinking and writing characteristic of your particular discipline. We begin the course by asking you to think, write, and talk about the connection between academic writing and the work of academic disciplines.

Writing assignment. By 4:00 p.m., Monday, August 24, please post copies of your first assignment on the Blackboard site for your discussion section; also bring three hard copies to class on Wednesday evening. If you have trouble with Blackboard, send your assignments to your discussion group leader.

This week’s assignment has two distinct parts. The first is intended to help you reflect on the role of writing in your own discipline. The second is intended to help you begin to assemble the syllabus you will give to your students at the beginning of the semester. Both are intended to help you reflect on what it means to write in a discipline, for yourself and for your students.

1. **For everyone:** *Anatomy of the Writing Process*. Choose a piece of academic writing you’ve produced during your time at Cornell. It could be a seminar paper, a dissertation proposal or chapter, a conference paper. It should be a piece of writing that matters to you. Write a short essay in which you narrate *the process of writing it*. You may want to consider the following questions as you write: what sequence of steps did you follow as you wrote? Was this sequence typical for you? What research did you do and how did you do it? What kinds of material did you engage with as you wrote? How is this engagement reflected in the piece itself? How does this piece participate in the discourse of your discipline? What observations can you make about the language you use? Although the focus of this piece should be on *the writing process*, be sure your readers have some sense about the subject of the piece itself. Feel free to include excerpts if necessary. Do not include the entire piece.

2. **For instructors teaching in the fall:** *Course Description/Rationale/Calendar*. This part of the assignment has three sections.

A) Include the 125-word (brochure) description of your seminar.

B) Write a rationale for the course. Explain to an audience of colleagues who may know little or nothing about your discipline or your topic how this course will introduce first year college students to your discipline, your topic, and college writing. Try to address these questions: What makes your course a writing course? What do you want your students to learn over the course of the semester? What do you want them to write?

C) For instructors who are teaching this fall: By now, those of you who are teaching this fall should be almost ready to meet your students for the first time. Please post (and bring to class) copies of

whatever you plan to distribute on the first day. This should include a syllabus, first writing assignment, and notes or handouts for first day activities.

Presenter(s), first day activities: _____

D) **For instructors who are not teaching until the spring semester:** Your *Indispensable Reference* includes week-by-week calendars of the spring semester. As a first draft of your syllabus we'd like you to sketch out the major events on the semester calendar. These might include possible due dates for papers, possible reading assignments, library sessions or other out of class events, conference times, film screenings, and vacations. Include as much detail as you wish. This is a draft, but it is a draft that will help you to structure your work for the rest of Writing 7100.

Required Reading

- David Bartholomae. "Inventing the University" *Teaching Composition*: 2-31. One of the most influential pieces written about the teaching of writing. The author interrogates the intellectual relationship between college students and the universe they learn to write themselves into.
- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk, *The Elements of Teaching Writing*, Introduction and Chapter 1, "Integrating Writing and Learning in Your Course Design."
- Gottschalk. "TAs and the Teaching of Writing at Cornell: A Historical Perspective." In *Local Knowledges*... 22-40. On Blackboard.
- Isaac Kramnick, "Writing Politics." In *Writing and Revising the Disciplines*: 75-89. Kramnick's essay and Mermin's include engaging discussions about the disciplinary conventions of writing in their respective fields. On Blackboard.
- N. David Mermin. "Writing Physics." In *Writing and Revising the Disciplines*: 15 - 28. On Blackboard.
- James Slevin, "A Letter to Maggie." *Teaching Composition*: 59-64. The author—who was an influential figure in composition studies and a longtime consultant to Cornell's writing program—argues that college writing is fundamentally about evidence.

Discussion leader(s): _____

Discussion leaders open discussion with a few comments but primarily initiate discussion with provocative questions or by other suitable, or even innovative, means. During this class, your instructors will recruit volunteers for future presentations. You may want to look through the syllabus to see in which week you would be most interested in making a presentation.

WEEKS TWO - FIVE OVERVIEW

Composing and Sequencing Assignments / Intervening in Student Writing

Teaching writing means writing a lot. You write assignments, asking students to do something; they do it; you write back telling them how well they did. You may also provide written models intended to help students provide feedback to other writers, or to evaluate their own writing. The middle weeks of this course are concerned with these modes of writing and the connections between them.

A good assignment should do three things: provide students with an occasion for writing; provide them with an audience; and provide them with a reason for writing. Writing excellent assignments does not guarantee that you will receive excellent essays, but writing poor assignments almost certainly guarantees that you won't.

When we work on composing and sequencing, we focus on writing assignments and preparatory work, and conceiving of how sequences of assignments help students develop effective processes for writing in your course.

When we work on engaging with student writing, we consider how to engage with student writing in ways that are valuable for the student and not overly burdensome for the instructor. We consider how and when to use conferences, written comments, and peer collaboration. Here are a few of the questions we will try to address: how can we help students become more astute readers of published texts, their own writing, and the writing of their peers? What should written comments achieve? When are they most effective? How can conferences, in-class work, and peer review supplement (or replace) written comments? How can students collaborate with each other? How can teachers collaborate with students and with other teachers?

We will also try to make connections between composing assignments and intervening in student writing. In particular we will consider how a good assignment can contain within it the terms for an effective response.

WEEK TWO, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Writing Process I: Preparatory Writing/Sequencing Within a Single Assignment

Most writing is not produced in a single sitting. Experienced writers take it for granted that writing proceeds through stages. They expect to do preliminary work prior to drafting an essay/article/poem/book. Once they have drafted the piece, they expect to revise. Think about your own writing process. How do you get from an idea to a finished piece? Think about the procedures of your discipline. Are particular practices—field notes, interviews, close reading, sketches, journal entries—typical of the early stages of the writing process? Do these practices have a place in your writing class?

One way to help your students think of writing as a process is to build a sequence of steps into your assignments. What are the components of a completed essay? Should it include summaries of research; close reading of texts; an argument? How can you teach students to work on these different components of an essay? How can you help them put the pieces together? Consider the advantages of asking students to produce low stakes writing on a weekly (or daily) basis, rather than producing only a few high stakes performances each semester. Well written assignments, which include preparatory writing, help students produce writing that is firmly embedded in your course.

Writing Assignment: Please distribute copies of this assignment to your partners and your instructors on BB (at the appropriate spot on “Discussion Board”) by noon on Monday, August 31. Bring three hard copies to class.

Imagine a completed piece of writing you want your students to produce. Drafting a rationale might help you figure out what the final version of this piece might look like and do. Then do some reverse engineering: design a sequence of classroom activities, preparatory work, and an essay assignment that makes it likely that they will produce the essay you want to read. You should turn in the following: the rationale; the preparatory work; and the essay assignment.

Please note: the assignment should be written for its intended audience—the students who will produce the work. Include dates that allow you to place this sequence on your course calendar. The *rationale* should be written for an audience of Writing 7100 colleagues.

Presenter(s): _____

Required Readings

- “Archive of Teaching Materials.” Do a search for one assignment sequence that you find to be of interest and on which you can comment in class and in the rationale for your own assignment sequence (above)
- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk, *The Elements of Teaching Writing*, Chapter 2, "Designing Writing Assignments and Assignment Sequences," and 5, "Informal and Preparatory Writing."
- Hjortshoj. *The Transition to College Writing*: Chapter 4, “How Good Writing Gets Written” and Chapter 6, “Footstools and Furniture.”
- Nancy Sommers. “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers.” *Teaching Composition*: 195-205. The director considers the gaps between the language experienced writers use when talking about their writing and the gaps used by relatively inexperienced student writers.

Discussion leader(s): _____

WEEK 3, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Responding to Student Writing: Writing, Conferencing, and Collaborating

Teachers have opportunities to respond to student writing in many different ways, at many different stages of the writing process. Writing to a student about a paper is a powerful way to intervene in a student’s life as a writer. A conference can be just as powerful. A discussion at an early stage of a paper can sometimes do more to improve a final draft than extensive written comments. For some students, the most memorable feedback they receive comes from peers. This week we consider some of these questions: when are written interventions most effective? What form can they take? What can you communicate to students in writing? What role should grading and evaluating play when you write to students about their work? We also want to consider other opportunities to respond to student writing. How can you use class time to provide feedback to individuals or groups of students? What can students learn from reading each other’s work?

What can you do in a conference? How can we use various kinds of collaboration in the writing class, including peer writing groups and group conferences?

Writing assignment: In your discussion section you will receive access to a copy of a student essay, associated drafts and preparatory work, and the assignment that inspired it. All the people in the class will comment on this essay and compare their responses to the essay. Your instructors will provide further details.

Presentation(s): This week's presenters will have the opportunity to present and discuss their responses to the papers under discussion. This will be an opportunity to test drive an approach to responding.

Presenter(s): _____

Readings

- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk. *The Elements of Teaching Writing*. Chapter 3, "What Can You do with Student Writing? Efficient Methods for Reading, Response, and Evaluation," and Chapter 4, "Assigning and Responding to Revision."
- Peter Elbow, "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment." *Teaching Composition*: 387-406. Elbow provides an alternative system for grading/evaluating; he helps us think through what we do when we look at student essays.
- Elliot Shapiro. "Why I Don't Grade Papers." Available at the W7100: Teaching Writing link on the Knight Institute web site: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/ This essay presents arguments for reconsidering the role of grading in writing courses.
- Judith Pierpont, "ESL Students in First-Year Writing Seminars: Helping Instructors to Address their Language Needs" W7100 Web site. The author is a member of the Writing Workshop faculty and an expert on teaching students whose first language is not English.

Suggested readings

- Nancy Sommers. "Responding to Student Writing." *TC*: 377-386. Sommers considers various traditional modes of responding to student writing, and the ways that certain responses can take appropriate student work. This is a famous essay, with good cause.
- James P. Purdy. "Calling off the Hounds: Technology and the Visibility of Plagiarism." *Teaching Composition*: 305-324. Purdy examines the ways that technology has been used to track down plagiarism, and the risks inherent in these technologies.

Discussion leader(s): _____

WEEK 4, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

Looking at Language: Sentences, Paragraphs and Style

All writing classes are fundamentally language classes. Disciplines are marked by particular kinds of language use. In this week's class and this week's assignment we ask you to think about language as something you want your students to understand and something you want them to be able to use. Think about how you can teach your students to be more astute producers of prose and more astute readers of the prose of others. When designing your assignment, you may find it helpful to build it around distinctive features of the texts you plan on teaching or distinctive linguistic features of your discipline. This should also provide you with an occasion to consider how you use class time to teach writing.

Your students are most likely to produce good writing if they feel some stake in it. They are most likely to care about writing good sentences if they have ideas they want to communicate and understand that in choosing from a range of possibilities, they can communicate their ideas more effectively. Technical correctness (e.g. rules of comma usage) matters, but correctness is more likely to be present in writing produced by someone who has something to say and understands that she has a variety of ways to say it and is willing to choose from a variety of options. Correctness often follows from having learned about the choices writers make about punctuation (do I choose a colon or a dash?); syntax (do I want simple sentences or a compound/complex sentence?); diction (would slang be appropriate?); and rhythm (should I vary sentence length or sentence structure within a paragraph?). Language use is much more than grammatical correctness.

Writing Assignment: Unless you are presenting your assignment, please post a copy of this assignment on Blackboard by noon, Monday, September 14. Bring three hard copies of parts 2 and 3 to class.

1. Complete the style assignment posted on Blackboard on Discussion Board for this week. We are asking you to try this assignment to get a concrete idea of the kind of work you might like to ask your students to do.
2. Then develop a set of classroom activities and writing assignments that help students understand the sentence level choices writers make. Try to design an assignment that will help students make reasoned, informed choices about matters such as syntax and diction. As usual, embed it in your course by putting the real dates on the assignment. There are many excellent examples of style assignments available on the Archive of Teaching Materials that it would be a good idea to consult.
3. As always, conclude the assignment with a rationale addressed to your colleagues. See the note on Archive readings below.

Presentation(s): This week's presentation gives one or several students the opportunity to "test drive" a language assignment. Rather than distributing the assignment in advance, the presenter(s) will present the exercise to the class as if teaching it. This activity can be as interactive as the instructor's own class would be. If presenters need to distribute anything in advance, please arrange doing so with your instructors and classmates.

Presenter(s): _____

Readings

- Archive of Teaching Materials. Do a search for two style assignments that you find to be of interest and on which you can comment in class and in the rationale for your own assignment.
- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk, *The Elements of Teaching Writing*, Chapter 6, "Teaching Writing at the Sentence Level."
- Hjortshoj, *The Transition to College Writing*, Chapter 5, "Rules and Errors."
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/ I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: Norton, 2006. Chapters 3 and 4 (Chpt. 3 will be necessary for the assignment above; 4 gives you more insight into the kind of thing the book does.) On Blackboard.
- Williams, Joseph M. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. Chapters 3 and 6. On Blackboard.

Much of the most helpful work on teaching writing at the sentence level can be found in style manuals. You may find it helpful to borrow from these manuals and/or order one for your class. The advantage of ordering a manual is that you do not need to invent as much: you can draw on the work of others. However, you should be aware that these books tend to be costly. Make sure your students get their money's worth.

A library of these books is available for browsing in the Knight Institute office (McGraw 101) and in the Writing Workshop office (Rockefeller 174). Three of the most popular include:

- Richard Lanham. *Revising Prose*. 5th ed. Longman, 2006.
- John Trimble. *Writing with Style*. 2nd ed. Prentice-Hall, 2000.
- Joseph Williams. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. Pearson/Longman, 2009.

NB: Make an appointment with your section instructor for some time in Weeks 5 or 6 to discuss your assignments for those weeks in person.

WEEK 5, SEPTEMBER 23

Sequencing Assignments Across the Course

This week our focus shifts to sequences connecting one project with another. We ask you to build on the work of previous weeks to produce a sequence of essay assignments, complete with preparatory exercises. This may involve revising and/or expanding on previous assignments, such as the *preparatory work* you produced for Week 2 or the *language assignment* you produced for Week 4. We also revisit strategies for intervening in student writing.

Writing Assignment: Once again, post your assignments to Blackboard by noon on Monday and bring three hard copies to class.

(a) A sequence of three essay assignments, including preparatory work, in the order in which they will be given (e.g., the second, third, and fourth essay assignments for the semester). Write these up exactly as you hope to hand them to your students. Once again, you may find it helpful to draft the rationale first and reverse engineer the preparatory work and the final assignment. Put real dates on these assignments and address them to the students. If you are teaching for the first time in the spring, you should submit the first three essay assignments, along with a completed calendar for the 14 weeks of reading and writing assignments.

(b) Don't forget the rationale, addressed to colleagues.

Presenter(s): _____

Reading

- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk. *The Elements of Teaching Writing*. Chapter 7, "Orchestrating the Research Paper."
- Hjortshoj, *The Transition to College Writing*. Chapter 8, "Research Papers."
- Williams, Joseph M. "On the Maturing of Legal Writers: Two Models of Growth and Development." *Legal Writing: The Journal of the Legal Writing Institute*. Fall: 1991, 1 – 18. Available at the W7100: Teaching Writing link on the Knight Institute web site: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/
- Sample assignments available in the Archive of Teaching Materials. Be prepared to discuss one or more of these in class, or mention in your rationale what you found that was useful.

Discussion leader(s): _____

WEEK 6, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

Looking Forward / Looking Back

Today we look back at the first half of the semester and look forward to the end of the semester, and your future as teachers. In looking back, we will consider what has gone well and what you wish you could do over. As we look forward we will discuss how to apply the lessons of this course, and your experience as a writing teacher for the past seven weeks, to the rest of this semester, your next semester of teaching, and your future.

Please post your assignments by noon, Monday, September 28, on Blackboard. As usual, bring three hard copies to class.

Writing assignment

The materials you submit should represent the culmination of the assignments you've produced during the course of the term. Whether you are teaching Fall or Spring, you should include a rationale.

If you are currently teaching, your assignment consists of:

a detailed plan for to be shared with your students for four future weeks of your seminar. You will undoubtedly want to draw on the Writing 7100 assignments that you have already completed.

Presenter(s): _____

If you are teaching in the spring your assignment consists of:

1. a plan for the first class of the semester.
2. a revised version of the calendar you produced during the first week, ready to give to your students.
3. the syllabus and other course materials you plan to distribute on the first day.
4. a detailed plan for the first two to four weeks of your course, including classroom activities, paper assignments, and whatever else you might need to get yourself and your students through the opening weeks of the semester.

Presenter(s): _____

Readings

- Hjortshoj/Gottschalk. *The Elements of Teaching Writing*. Chapter 8, "Links between Writing, Reading, Discussion, and Oral Presentation."; Chapter 10, "Teaching as a Work in Progress"; and Conclusion, "National Implications, Local Practices."
- Hjortshoj, *The Transition to College Writing*: Chapter 1, "Orientation," and "Conclusion."
- *The Indispensable Reference* (for those of you teaching for the first time in the spring), pp. 3- 11.

Discussion leader(s): _____