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Title: *Texting, Social Media, and Literacy: Writing in the Collegiate Classroom*

The accompanying research report is submitted to the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Graduate School in partial completion of the requirements for the

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Technical and Professional Communication

Research Adviser: Daisy Pignetti, Ph.D.

Submission Term/Year: Fall, 2011

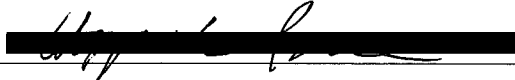
Number of Pages: 55

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 6th edition

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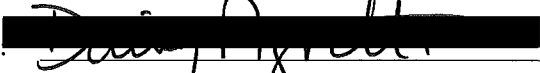
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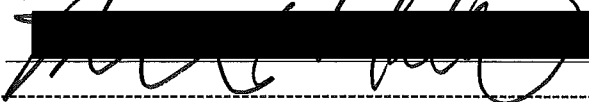
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Barone, Elizabeth E. *Texting, Social Media, and Literacy: Writing in the Collegiate Classroom*

Abstract

Through an analysis of writing samples and the completion of a survey, 37 University of Wisconsin-Stout Freshman English 102 students were assessed on their ability to write formal argument and research-based essays along with their texting, social media and instant messaging habits. The papers were analyzed using MS Word analytics tools, as well as taking into account the grade received by the professor. The survey polled students on the details of their cell phone history and use, the number of texts they send per day, the number of hours spent on Facebook each day, and the number of hours spent instant messaging per day. The group of participants was all 18-22 years old, each having their own cell phone with an unlimited texting plan. The study revealed no significant trends correlating these habits with their writing, however, the often overlooked risk of multitasking and the ability to navigate multiple literacies emerged during the study.

Keywords: instant messaging, literacy, social media, texting, writing

Acknowledgments

I would like to start by thanking my thesis advisor, Dr. Daisy Pignetti, for your continual support and inspiration through all of the coursework and the research process. I have grown as a writer and researcher through your guidance and enthusiasm for the field. I would also like to thank Dr. Julie Watts, my program advisor, for your guidance and expertise. You truly are an inspiration as a professional and an individual. Thank you also to my committee members, Dr. Joleen Hanson and Dr. Richard Tafalla for your guidance and insight.

Second, I want to thank my parents for instilling in me the importance of education and life-long learning. You have always been there to support me. I would not be where I am today without you. I hope to pass on that same love of learning to my children.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Justin, and children: Tehya, Gabrielle, Sophia and Finnegan. This journey has not always been easy. I appreciate your support through all of the stressful times and for your continued love and encouragement.

Table of Contents

	Page
.....	Page
Abstract.....	2
List of Tables	6
Chapter I: Introduction.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Purpose of the Study	10
Assumptions of the Study	10
Definition of Terms.....	11
Limitations of the Study.....	11
Methodology	12
Chapter II: Literature Review	13
Texting and Literacy.....	13
Demographics of a Texter.....	13
Literacy Redefined.....	14
Technology Literacy and Education	15
Implications of Texting and Social Media.....	17
Summary.....	18
Chapter III: Methodology	20
Subject Selection and Description	20
Instrumentation	21
Data Collection Procedures.....	21
Limitations	23

Chapter IV: Results.....	24
Summary of Data.....	24
Statistical Analysis.....	26
Case Study #1.....	28
Case Study #2.....	29
Case Study #3.....	29
Case Study #4.....	29
Summary of Case Studies.....	30
Other Relevant Observations.....	31
Chapter V: Discussion.....	32
Limitations.....	32
Conclusions.....	32
Recommendations.....	34
References.....	36
Appendix A: Participant Survey.....	39
Appendix B: Argument Essay Data Table.....	40
Appendix C: Research Essay Data Table.....	42
Appendix D: Survey Data Table.....	44
Appendix E: Correlations Data Table.....	47
Appendix F: Argument Essay Assignment and Rubric.....	49
Appendix G: Research Essay Assignment and Rubric.....	51

List of Tables

	Page
.....	
Table 1. Median Numbers Used in Computation	22
Table 2. Average Range, Minimum and Maximum Points for Each Paper	25
Table 3. Survey Response Data to Determine the Average Points for Data Given.....	26
Table 4. Correlations.....	27

Chapter I: Introduction

Throughout history and the development of the written word, literacy has been continually evolving. With each new development certain elements fade away as others become the norm. The evolution of literacy certainly goes hand-in-hand with the advent of emerging technologies. Dating back to the fifteenth century, the development of the printing press necessitated a growing need for literacy as the written word became widely available and an integral part of society. In brief, the technology drove the literacy.

For years this was the standard as the printing press was able to make books, newspapers and other publications easily and affordably accessible to the public. It was not until the twentieth century that literacy shifted again. As computer technologies were being developed, words were traveling at much higher rates between people and communication flourished. As the internet entered into the picture the entire face of literacy shifted. People were no longer reading just books, newspapers, and magazines; they were reading online. As the technology of the internet has continued to develop over the past quarter century, new ways to communicate have come with it. Seemingly gone are the days of sitting down to read lengthy novels as literacy came to be characterized by short snippets of text on the computer and cell phone texts. According to a 2009 University of Alabama study, “Text messaging has surely given our society a quick means through which to communicate, taking out the need for capitalization, punctuation, the use and knowledge of sentence structure and the detail that make good statements great” (“Text messaging,” 2009).

Currently, literacy has come to be defined by the technology used to transfer and disseminate it. The language of an email differs from that of a text message. Though formal writing is present in the twenty-first century it may not necessarily be the same formal writing

present 50 years ago. However, everything is not radically shifting away from conventional writing. Just this year (2011), the Oxford English Dictionary added the following “text speak” lingo to its’ lexicon, “OMG [‘oh my god/goodness/gosh’], LOL [‘laugh out loud’], FYI [‘for your information’], IMHO [‘in my humble/honest opinion’] and BFF [‘best friend forever’].” Interesting to note, the article noting these additions also claims that, “the expression OMG has had its history tracked all the way back to 1917, while LOL used to mean “little old lady” back in the ‘60s” (Savov, 2011). Dating even further back, the use of the abbreviation O.K. entered the American vernacular through a publication in the *Boston Morning Post* in 1839 according to History.com. The letters O.K. actually are “an abbreviation for ‘oll correct,’ a popular slang misspelling of ‘all correct’ at the time.” The article goes on to discuss how during that time period it was popular among educated youth to “misspell words intentionally, then abbreviate them and use them as slang when talking to one another” (“OK enters vernacular,” 2011). So, in a sense the “text speak” of today’s youth is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Nonetheless, there are changes occurring, even if it is almost cyclical, but, as with the development of any new technology, there will no doubt be elements made obsolete and new standards created.

While changes in literacy and technology clearly affect the public in general, there seems to be much debate over the beneficial or adverse effects on the youth, particularly their academic performance. According to last year’s study by the Pew Research Center, “Fully three-quarters of teen cell phone users (75%) have unlimited texting” (Lenhart, 2010). As new technologies and schools of thought develop there are always skeptics—typically of the older generation—that will be quick to assume that if they personally made due without certain technologies or literacies that certainly the younger generation can do the same. This skepticism is driven by an overwhelming sense that the standard for written English is on the decline. Professor George

Willams (2011) writes in his article *Student, Reading and Writing* published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, “At every school where I have taught, I’ve been assigned first- or second-year writing courses to teach, and at every one of these schools, someone from another department has expressed dismay at their students’ inability to write and have asked me what in the world we are teaching students.” Whether or not the standard for writing is dropping or not, it is clear some shift in literacy is occurring. This shift is evident in college English courses that no longer focus on grammar but more on the writing process itself. This is guided by the assumption that students are getting the grammar knowledge they require through high school English courses. Although a somewhat controversial debate, increasingly, research is showing that the study of formal grammar, per se, has no beneficial effect on student writing. This idea is not new as Patrick Hartwell (1985) discusses studies on the issue concluding that, “formal grammar instruction has no effect on the quality of students’ writing nor on their ability to avoid error.” With college campuses increasingly featuring technology, through campus-wide laptop programs, like at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, writing courses may highlight the medium more so than the “meat” of the message.

The wide variety of technology available today allows for a plethora of literacy variation. Students ranging from elementary school through college are pulled in different directions with various technologies. However, Jie Jenny Zou (2011) notes in her piece, *College Students Lead in Internet Use and Tech Gadgets, Study Finds*, that, “Regardless of educational background, young adults ages 18-24 were generally much more likely to be Internet users, engage in social media, and to own Web-enabled devices like laptops and smartphones.” They text message in terse, almost cryptic, language, read lengthy print texts, peruse websites and still write formally. The writing style of texting and IMing is almost like a different language than that of traditional

formal writing. There are actually websites, such as www.lingo2word.com that will translate text-speak into regular English. In a sense, it is conceivable to say that a student well-versed in both styles of writing is almost bi-lingual. While it is difficult to say definitively whether or not evolving literacy due to technology aids or hinders college students, it is certainly intriguing to consider the effects of these on the development of reading and writing in today's society.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to address the effects of technology, specifically text messaging and use of social media, on the ability of college-aged students to write a formal essay. While several studies have been conducted using elementary and high-school-aged students, there is a clear lack of research regarding higher education and the effects of certain technologies on literacy and the ability to write formally.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to seek out any correlation between student's texting and social media habits and their ability to write a formal essay. This research will hopefully provide insight into the current level of literacy for University of Wisconsin-Stout freshman English students by revealing trends related to the student's texting and social media habits and their writing ability. Ideally this research can aid in future freshman English instructors and course curriculum through a more thorough understanding of student's literacy and reading and writing habits.

Assumptions of the Study

Because all of the students in the study were in an English 102 class during the same semester with the same professor, this study assumes that their writing instruction was the same.

It was also assumed that the students were aware of their personal texting and social media habits and that they answered questions regarding these on the survey truthfully.

Definition of Terms

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test. A formula used by Microsoft Word to determine the approximate grade level at which text is written. It is derived using the following:

$$(.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$$

Where ASL (average sentence length) is computed by the number of words divided by the number of sentences, and ASW (average number of syllables per word) is computed by the number of syllables divided by the number of words. The average level typically falls between 7.0 and 8.0 (Kincaid, Fishburne & Chissom, 1975).

Flesch Reading Ease Test. A formula used by Microsoft Word to determine the approximate reading ease at which the text was written. It is derived using the following:

$$206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$$

Where ASL (average sentence length) is computed by the number of words divided by the number of sentences, and ASW (average number of syllables per word) is computed by the number of syllables divided by the number of words. The average range is typically 60-70 (Kincaid, Fishburne & Chissom, 1975).

Text Speak. An abridged form of writing consisting of shortened spellings of words used primarily in text messages sent using cell phones and through instant messaging (IMing) on the computer (Self, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

This study is confined to 37 students from the University of Wisconsin-Stout campus. Its participants were drawn from two sections of English 102 from the same professor. There is no

way to confirm the answers given on the survey are accurate. Based on their answers, though, the study assumes shows that the students have a good understanding of their texting and social media habits.

Methodology

Using 37 students from two sections of English 102 at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, a research study was conducted to determine the influence of student's texting and social media habits in their writing. The particular professor was chosen because of her experience in research composition studies and linguistics. The students were administered a brief survey to capture their texting and social media trends. At the conclusion of the semester two major paper assignments were analyzed: an argument essay and a research essay. Using Microsoft Word analytics, data was calculated on each of the papers. In addition to this data, the grade the students received from the professor was also taken into account. All of the data was then put into Microsoft Excel so that correlations could be run on all of the calculations. The answers to the survey were not assessed until after the students' writing samples were thoroughly analyzed to ensure no bias entered into the writing analysis. This study seeks to address the perceived gap in research regarding higher education and the effect of technology-induced literacies and the influence of these as they affect a student's ability to write formally.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Texting and Literacy

A rather new phenomenon in the whole realm of communication, texting has quite literally exploded as a global means of communicating. With its inherently terse linguistic qualities, the trend of texting inevitably leaves many asking if or how it is affecting literacy as we know it. In addressing this issue this literature review will cover the demographics of a texter, the way in which literacy has been redefined, technology literacy as it relates to education and the implications of texting.

Demographics of a Texter

Who is texting? Is it only the “younger” generation? According to a Pew Research Center Publications article, *Teens, Cell Phones and Texting: Text Messaging Becomes a Centerpiece Communication*, “Cell-phone texting has become the preferred channel of basic communication between teens and their friends...[s]ome 75% of 12-17 year olds now own cell phones. Fully 72% of all teens –or 88% of teen cell phone users – are text-messagers.” The study also shows that “One in three teens sends more than 100 text messages a day...[and] half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day” (Lenhart, 2010). However, teens are not the only group sending text messages. David Crystal’s (2008) book, *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8*, describes a study in the UK saying, “80 percent of under-25s texted rather than called. On the other hand, so did 14 percent of people over 55.” This clearly shows that texting is not just a passing teenage fad. Crystal (2008) goes on to discuss the global trend in texting replacing traditional phone calls. In the article *Don’t Call Me, I Won’t Call You*, published in the March 18, 2011 edition of the *New York Times*, Pamela Paul writes how recently “full-fledged adults have seemingly given up the telephone—landline, mobile, voice mail and all. According to Nielsen Media, even on

cellphones, voice spending has been trending downward, with text spending expected to surpass it within three years.” Texting, however, is not just something for personal lives. Naomi Baron (2008) notes in her book *Always On* how texting has made its way into the workplace as well. Baron (2008) elaborates on the use of texting with virtual business teams, as well as within the office to maintain contact when one co-worker may be at a lunch meeting or conference. Seeing the prevalence of texting across many genres of society it is apparent that it is affecting numerous facets of life—on a global scale.

Literacy Redefined

Literacy is no longer merely being able to read and write as traditionally done with paper and books. It has evolved to encompass a much larger scope of material forcing readers to maintain various different literacies to accommodate all of the technology media available to communicate with. Alan Porter (2010) talks about the newly defined literacy in his piece *Preparing for the Next Generation*. Porter (2010) relates a first-hand account of watching his daughter doing research for a paper, using a text book, realizing, “she was ‘browsing’ just as if she were online” (p. 20). Tony Self (2009) reiterates this idea of a shift in reading preference in his article *What if Readers Can’t Read?* Self (2009) discusses the present day reader’s inability to focus on lengthy texts noting that “Dr. Bruce Friedman, Professor of Pathology at the University of Michigan, found that he has almost lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article on the web or in print” (p.13). Self (2009) also shows the dramatic shift in literacy through noting, “since 2006, New Zealand high school students have been permitted to use ‘text speak’ in national exams” (p. 12). This dramatic shift in literacy curriculum shows the heavy impact of redefined literacy on culture and society.

In some instances, however, literacy and writing is seeing a shift overcompensating to the other side of the spectrum. Ben Yagoda (2011) discusses in his piece *The Elements of Clunk*, published in the Chronicle of Higher Education how college students are not using abbreviated cryptic language in their writing, but rather they “make it longer and more prosaic. They give a new sound to prose. I call it clunk.” Yagoda blames student’s lack of reading, particularly reading of formal high-level writing for lack of proper punctuation. He notes, “standard written English is a whole other language from its spoken (and texted) counterpart, with conventions not just of punctuation... You learn them by reading.” This trend of “hypercorrection” stems from a seeming desire to sound fancier, “When they write in a formal setting—for class assignment or for publication in a blog or magazine—they almost always favor length over brevity, ornateness over simplicity, literalness over figuration” (2011). Texting and social media are not necessarily entirely to blame for the lack of reading, however, it is clear that the increase in new reading and writing mechanisms is somehow affecting the writing of today.

Technology Literacy and Education

Being that texting seems to be prevalent among school-aged children it is natural that educators would seek to find a correlation between texting habits and school performance. In a study done by Beverly Plester, Clare Wood and Victoria Bell (2008) they explore the texting habits of 11-12 year olds and the effect they have on the student’s written language skill. As described in the article *Text msg n school literacy: does texting and knowledge of text abbreviations adversely affect children’s literacy attainment?* Plester et al. (2008) relate the study in which students were asked to translate between standard English and text messages. The study determined that children with high textism aptitude scored high on verbal reasoning and concluded that “good writing attainment was associated with greater use of textisms”

(Plester et al., 2008, p.1). In the end the research concluded that texting does not correlate to decreased written language skills for 11-12 year olds. Additionally, a ten-year study in the UK found that “children who are fluent at text messaging have better literacy skills than youngsters who do not use mobile phones...[s]cientists discovered that rather than destroying their use of English, texting improves children’s ability to recognize rhymes and speech patterns” (“Children Text,” 2011).

Citing many of the same concerns and findings as found in the Plester et al. study, Steve Vosloo (2009) shares in his piece *The effects of texting on literacy: Modern scourge or opportunity?* How teachers are using the texting trend in their classes citing the example of “Cindi Rigsbee, a sixth- and seventh-grade reading-resource teacher in the USA, shows her learners texts from Old English, Middle English, contemporary English from the time of *Jane Eyre*, and a MySpace page” (p. 4). Vosloo (2009) goes on to note how “other teachers have contrasted IM lingo with Shakespeare to demonstrate how English has evolved” (p. 4). Vosloo (2009) stresses many of the positive effects of texting on language and learning. From this perspective texting is seemingly something to compliment and expand literacy in the classroom. While it is encouraging to know that texting is not detrimental to the writing of pre-teens, the level of writing done at this age is not something to be classified as scholarly writing demonstrating an acute grasp of the English language such as that possibly expected by a college student.

Social Media and Education. Even college professors are playing into the new and evolving literacies in order to reach the students on their level. In the March 25, 2011, publication of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Tushar Rae discusses Princeton professor Jeff Nonokawa and his use of Facebook with his college students; “He started posting essays on

topics that he thought his students might need or enjoy and on topics he was personally curious about.” The students really appreciated the essays, one student said, “Jeff’s use of social media could serve as a useful lesson for faculty and administrators who wonder about how to incorporate new technologies in the classroom, and who don’t always seem to do so as successfully and smoothly as we young people might like.” At the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Professor Daisy Pignetti uses Twitter with her freshman English students in addition to the online course management tool, Desire 2 Learn, utilized by the university. Using Twitter, Professor Pignetti asked students to tweet responses to assigned readings as a springboard into larger class discussion. Students were encouraged to use Twitter to contact their professor with any questions as well as checking in for announcements, extra credit opportunities and links relevant to the class focus. Overall, the student response was quite positive with many noting how the professor seemed more accessible and like a “real person” since she was using social media as a part of the course (Pignetti, 2011).

Implications of Texting and Social Media

There is no doubt texting, along with web 2.0 technologies, is changing literacy. It seems, however, that this is not necessarily to the detriment of society. Kate Baggott (2006) reiterates this in her article *Literacy and Text Messaging* by saying, “There is simply much more pressure to know how to read than in the past when it comes to conversation, shopping, or work” (p. 1). People are reading constantly whether it’s recreational reading of lengthy novels, little snippets off a website, an e-mail message for work, or short brief text messages. Baggott also touches on youth and texting citing associate professor Eric Paulson noting, “they can text ‘IMHO’ on their cell phones, write ‘my opinion is’ in a school essay, and read “it is my belief that your scar hurts when Lord Voldemort is near you’ without getting discombobulated” (p. 1).

Changing literacy necessitates a need for maintaining multiple literacies as demonstrated by this example. The discernment and analytical reasoning skills necessary for accomplishing this are invaluable to students as they mature in their linguistic skills and begin to enter the “real world.”

Though texting does not seem to have negative implications relating to literacy, texting and technology in general also provide an endless distraction to easily side-tracked students. Matt Richtel (2010) elaborates on this trend in his article *Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction* noting the Kaiser Family Foundation’s revelation that “half of students from 8 to 18 are using the Internet, watching TV or using some other form of media either “most” (31 percent) or “some” (25 percent) of the time that they are doing homework” (p. 2). Is the younger generation really that good at multi-tasking, or are there some implications of this technology boom? Richtel (2010) discusses how literacies are not necessarily negatively affected, but grades are as students struggle to balance their virtual world with their real world.

Summary

Texting does not seem to be a passing fad or trend, but a new form of communication that is continually finding its way into new facets of everyday life. While it certainly has aided the evolution of literacy it is seemingly not necessarily a bad thing. However, many of the empirical studies only cite the effects of texting on the literacy of pre-teens through 18 year olds. While literacy at this level is important and developing, it is also not truly refined literacy. How has the existence of texting affected truly scholarly writing, or even just higher level writing such as that of collegiate undergraduates? It seems that the major concerns of society are with texting and youth rather than texting and academia or texting and the professional world. For now it may be safe to assume that the 20-plus generation has had the proper benefit of a text-free education, but

what about in five years, or ten years? Will literacy be the same then with the foundations of literacy changing currently?

Students today are pushed more and more into a fast-paced digital world through e-mail, texting and social media playing integral parts in their daily lives. The majority of college campuses require students to use the internet for everything from admissions, financial aid and registration to day-to-day class work, research and campus announcements. The importance of being tech savvy is no doubt key in achieving academic success (Goode, 2010). Many campuses, like the University of Wisconsin-Stout, pride themselves on being laptop campuses. These campuses encourage professors to utilize computer technology throughout their curriculum. The digital divide quickly draws the line in the sand between those who will succeed and those who will struggle. However, at what point does technological knowledge and the ability to navigate multiple literacies simultaneously no longer promote academic prowess but hinder it? Is it truly advantageous for students to be able to master multiple literacies throughout their academic career, or does this extreme trend of multitasking only lead to “master of none?”

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of texting and social media use on college freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Stout and their ability to write formally. The hypothesis is that texting, and social media use, negatively affect student's writing. Through the implementation of a survey, 37—of 47—students participated in the study by attesting to their texting and social media habits. Their writing samples were analyzed using MS Word analytics as well as the grading rubric of their professor. The data was then analyzed using MS Excel to conduct correlation calculations.

Subject Selection and Description

This study was conducted using 37 freshmen from the University of Wisconsin-Stout which is a laptop campus. The students were selected from two sections of English 102 taught by the same professor. I selected the particular professor because of her research interest in composition studies and linguistics. Her knowledge base provided valuable insight for setting up the study. To eliminate the variable of different teaching styles or different material being presented I felt it key that all of the students in the study have the same professor. All of the students were between the ages of 18 and 22. They all have their own cell phone with unlimited texting as a part of their cell phone plan.

After meeting with the professor of the class to discuss the parameters of my study, we agreed that I would come into her two 102 sections to administer the survey and introduce my study to the prospective student participants. I gave a brief presentation in the two English classes to present my research study and to hand out the survey. The students then had the option to complete the survey and commit to being a part of the study. I collected the surveys during this same class period.

Instrumentation

I created the survey specifically for this study. The survey consisted of nine questions relating to brief demographic information and to the student's cell phone plans and habits—including whether or not they had their own cell phone and if their plan included unlimited texting—and their use of social media—Facebook and Twitter—and instant messaging (iMing). The inclusion of the social media questions was to account for students that maybe did not text as frequently due to their cell phone, or lack thereof, or their cell phone plans and the specifics of texting associated with that plan. Appendix A details the actual survey.

Data Collection Procedures

The participants were given a nine question survey to assess their texting and social media habits. In coordination with the English professor teaching the two sections, I was given access to the student's writing assignments for the semester. I did not look at the answers to the surveys until after I felt I had sufficiently analyzed the individual writing samples to ensure that I would have no bias in assessing the students' writing ability. I pulled two of the major assignments: an argument essay and a research essay. The assignment for the argument essay required students to write a 700-1000 word essay directed at their peers with both similar and opposing views. The assignment for the research essay required students to compose an 1800-2000 word essay addressing a question related to a recent public event. For a complete overview of both assignments and the grading rubrics associated with them, see Appendices F and G. I was also able to obtain any comments the professor may have left regarding the writing, as well as the actual grade on both of the papers out of 100 points.

Data analysis. Initially the writing samples were analyzed using MS Word analytics tool. This tool was able to provide me with the following data regarding each student paper:

number of words, number of characters, number of paragraphs, number of sentences, number of sentences per paragraph, number of words per sentence, number of characters per word, the Flesch reading ease, and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level. In order to ensure that I was analyzing just the student's writing I only ran the analytics tools on the paper itself, not the header or the references page.

After this data was collected I created a MS Excel spreadsheet with it, and also included the score the paper received out of 100 points from the professor, and computed averages for the participants in the study for each of the data points collected. At this time I also pulled out the high and low ends of the data for each category. Using a similar procedure, I also compiled the data from the survey in MS Excel. Because some of the answers on the survey were ranges, I had to use the median of each range answer to compute average, high and low points for this data. The following table shows a representation of the median numbers used in the computations.

Table 1

Median Numbers Used in the Computations

How many years have you been texting?	On average, how many texts do you send in a day?	How many hours a day (do you spend on Facebook/using instant messaging/use Twitter)
1-2 = 1.5	<25 = 12.5	<1 = 0.5
3-4 = 3.5	25-50 = 37.5	1-3 = 2
5-6 = 5.5	50-99 = 74.5	4-6 = 5
	100-149 = 124.5	7-9 = 8
	150-249 = 199.5	>10 = NA
	>250 = 300	

Through combining the data in one master Excel spreadsheet I was then able to run correlations on all of the data. In consultation with University of Wisconsin-Stout Statistics professor, Dr. Loretta Thielman, I confirmed the validity of my statistical analysis and correlative studies (personal communication, August 30, 2011). With Dr. Thielman's guidance I was able to create scatter plots of particular data sets that revealed either strong correlations, or significant and surprising lack thereof.

Limitations

Given that the sample size was limited to 37 students from the same University; it is difficult to draw conclusions based in broad assumptions applicable to the general population of American college students. In retrospect, it may have been more beneficial to gather more precise data using more open-ended questions with the survey rather than broad ranges of data in the form of a Likert-scale. In a follow-up study I would like to have access to the students' phone bill records. If the study was more longitudinal more qualitative data could also be gathered through student interviews and the use of multiple surveys. However, this study serves to create a solid foundation for the study of college-aged student texting and social media habits in conjunction with their writing ability.

Chapter IV: Results

This study sought to assess the implications of texting and social media use in college freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Stout on their ability to write formally. After an initial survey was given to the students to gather brief demographic information and to assess their texting and social media habits, writing samples were collected and analyzed. The results were as follows:

Summary of Data

The two writing samples of the students were first analyzed using MS Word analytics tools. This analysis revealed the following information regarding each paper:

- Number of Words
- Number of Characters
- Number of Paragraphs
- Number of Sentences
- Number of Sentences per Paragraph
- Number of Words per Sentence
- Number of Characters per Word
- Number of Passive Sentences
- Flesch Reading Ease
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

The number of words, characters, paragraphs and sentences are used in the formulas for calculating the Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level.

Flesch Reading-Ease Formula: $206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula: $(.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$

Using MS Excel I calculated the average range, minimum and maximum points for each paper.

Table 2

Average Range, Minimum and Maximum Points for Each Paper

	Argument Essay	Student Number	Research Essay	Student Number
Flesch Reading Ease Minimum	40.2	7	24.3	7
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Minimum	5.9	2	7.1	18
Points out of 100 Minimum	64	4	0	15
Flesch Reading Ease Maximum	75.7	2	76.6	18
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Maximum	13.5	5	18.3	7
Points out of 100 Maximum	100	21	100	1
Average Flesch Reading Ease	62.7	NA	57.3	NA
Average Flesch-Kincaid Grade	9.6	NA	10.5	NA
Average Points out of 100	86.4	NA	74.3	NA
Average Letter Grade	B	NA	C	NA

I did a similar analysis in MS Excel with the survey response data to determine the average points for the data given.

Table 3

Survey Response Data to Determine the Average Points for Data Given

Survey Question	
How many years have you been texting?	4.36
On average, how many texts do you send in one day?	74.39
How many hours a day do you spend on Facebook?	2.27
How many hours a day do you spend using instant messaging (either on Facebook or other applications)?	1.11

The survey also revealed that all of the participants:

- Are 18-22 years old
- Have unlimited texting included in their cell phone plan
- Spend less than one hour per day on Twitter

Statistical Analysis

I ran statistical correlations using MS Excel on every data point against every other data point. Some of the obviously related pieces yielded high correlations, such as the number of characters in a paper to the number of words. One of these seemingly obvious correlations was between the Flesch-Kincaid grade level that students received on the argument essay correlated with the Flesch-Kincaid grade level they received on the research essay. This correlation calculated out to be 0.73 which is relatively high. This was expected as it is logical that if students wrote well on the first essay they were likely to do well on the next.

However, where high correlations might have been expected, they did not appear. In running the answers that students gave on the surveys against the analyses of their papers the

highest absolute value correlation was only 0.35. Many of the correlations hovered around 0.15, which is not scientifically significant.

Table 4

Correlations

Correlations	Argument Essay	Research Essay
Correlation of number of years texting to Flesch Reading Ease Level	-0.08	0.04
Correlation of number of years texting to Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	0.08	0.02
Correlation of number of years texting to points earned out of 100 on paper	0.17	0.22
Correlation of number of texts per day to Flesch Reading Ease Level	-0.14	0.10
Correlation of number of texts per day Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	0.01	0.20
Correlation of number of texts per day to points earned out of 100 on paper	0.15	0.32
Correlation of number of hours on Facebook to Flesch Reading Ease Level	0.25	0.19
Correlation of number of hours on Facebook to Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	-0.17	0.12
Number of hours on Facebook to points earned out of 100 on paper	-0.26	0.11
Number of hours spent instant messaging to Flesch Reading Ease Level	0.02	0.35
Number of hours spent instant messaging to Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	0.08	0.34
Number of hours spent instant messaging to points earned out of 100 on paper	-0.31	0.15

Two of the higher correlations in this data set could possibly be accounted for. The first, the correlation of the number of hours spent instant messaging to the points earned out of 100 on the argument essay was -0.31. This shows that as the number of hours of instant messaging went up the number of points out of 100 went down. While it is still a low correlation, it is slightly significant compared to the other correlations. This trend could be due to the level of multitasking students were partaking in while instant messaging and working on their papers. The second correlation of note is that between the number of texts per day and the number of points earned out of 100 on the research essay. This too, though a very slight correlation, could be due to the level of multitasking occurring during homework which could in turn hinder student's ability to completely follow directions on a given assignment.

Case Study 1: Student #2, poor writing, low texting, high social media

Student #2 scored poorly on the MS Word analytics—receiving 75.7 on the Flesch Reading Ease and 5.9 for the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Level—and more than ten points below the class average of 86.4 on the grade of 75 she received from the professor on the argument essay. The major problem with her paper was the occurrence of unintentional plagiarism through incorrectly crediting her sources (Hanson, 2011). Although her texting habits were relatively low, at just 25-50 per day, she did admit to spending 4-6 hours per day on Facebook, and 1-3 hours per day IMing, both of which fall above the class averages of 2.27 hours and 1.11 hours respectively. The amount of time spent doing these activities per day could certainly have impeded on homework and study time considering a possible nine hours per day could have been spent on social media and IMing.

Case Study 2: Student #21, excellent writing, low texting

Student #21 received a perfect paper, 100/100, on the argument essay. His Flesch Reading Ease score of 65.2 falls right in the average area, and his Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score of 9.5 is actually above average. His texting, Facebook and IMing habits all fall well below the averages of the class—74.39 texts per day, 2.27 hours per day on Facebook and 1.11 hours per day spent IMing—at less than 25 texts per day and less than one hour per day on Facebook and spent IMing. While his Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid levels were not exceptional, he was clearly able to follow the directions of the assignment and produce a piece of writing that met the requirements of the professor. In the graded comments the professor noted that the paper “completely fulfilled the rubric” (Hanson, 2011).

Case Study 3: Student #1, excellent writing, high texting

Student #1 scored quite well on the Flesch Reading Ease, earning a 49, and on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, earning an 11.6, for her research essay. She also did well according to the professor’s rubric, receiving a score of 96/100, which is significantly above the class average of 74.3 for the research essay. She also happened to fall above the class average with her texting and social media habits, revealing on the survey that she texts 150-249 times per day and spends 1-3 hours per day on Facebook. She did, however, note only spending less than one hour per day IMing. Seemingly this student has mastered the art of multitasking as well as the ability to shift between various literacies throughout her day.

Case Study 4: Student #7, high Flesch-Kincaid grade, low paper grade, high IMing

Student #7 initially presented a rather perplexing case since her Flesch Reading Ease (24.3) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (18.3) were both much higher than average, but her score on her research essay was a mere 69/100. After reviewing her research essay, though, it was

clear that her paragraphs lacked a clear focus and numerous sources were incorrectly cited bordering on plagiarism. The comments from the professor on her paper confirmed this noting that “the essay did not satisfy the most important requirements of the assignment” and the student “cited facts from published sources” but did not show how their personal views compared or contrasted with those of others (Hanson, 2011). The heavy use of outside sources and lack of personal voice can certainly account for the high scores on the Reading Ease and Grade Level scores. In addition to performing poorly on the assignment through a lack of following directions, student #7 admitted to spending 4-6 hours per day IMing, however, only texts 25-50 times per day and spends 1-3 hours per day on Facebook.

Summary of Case Studies

There does not seem to be any significant trends regarding students’ texting, Facebook and IMing habits. As evidenced by the case studies, it is clear that some students are quite proficient at navigating back and forth between various literacies and others are not. But, there is no real consistency within this. In case study 1, student #2, shows a student who seems to be lured in to Facebook and IMing in lieu of completing homework properly. With a possible nine hours a day devoted to these activities it is apparent that other areas in her life are likely neglected. A near textbook example of what some might expect from a study like this, case study 2 demonstrates excellent writing skills, on the part of student #2, and very minimal texting, Facebook and IMing. Case study 3 documenting student #1 is a prime example of a student’s ability to both multitask and switch between multiple means and modes of writing all within a given day. Case study 4 is rather perplexing as student #7 received excellent ratings on the Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch-Kincaid grade level, however, received only 69/100 from the professor on her research essay. Upon further investigation it was clear that student #7 did

not complete the assignment as asked and relied heavily on writing from outside sources. This explains the discrepancy between to analytics and the grade received. In this case, the student was not successful at multitasking and switching between various literacies.

Other Relevant Observations

Although there were no significant trends across the participants regarding texting, Facebook and IMing habits and their actual ability to write formally, there were some interesting trends to note regarding these habits and students' ability to complete an assignment. Of the students that agreed to participate in the study, two of them--#4 and #33—did not turn in the research essay. One of those two, student #4, who did not turn in a research essay, said he texts 100-149 times per day, spends one to three hours a day on Facebook, but only IMs less than one hour per day. This student chose to drop the class late in the semester after the possibility of passing the class was no longer an option. Student #33, was a bit of an anomaly, however. He only texted 25-50 times per day, spent one to three hours on Facebook, and less than one hour IMing.

Of the entire group of participants, one student unintentionally plagiarized, student #35. She unintentionally plagiarized large portions of her argument essay giving her an F on the Assignment. She admitted to texting 150-249 times per day and spending one to three hours on Facebook. She did note, however, spending less than an hour per day IMing.

As evidenced through these case studies, there is no clear trend linking texting and social media to poor writing. Some students do both successfully, while others do neither successfully. Clearly other factors and variables are at play when it comes to student performance in the collegiate classroom.

Chapter V: Discussion

This research study has addressed the hypothesis of possible correlations between University of Wisconsin-Stout freshman English students' texting and social media habits and their ability to write formally. Through the implementation of a survey, in coordination with a University of Wisconsin-Stout English professor, 37 students were polled on their texting and social media habits and samples of their writing were analyzed.

Limitations

This study was limited to a select group of freshman English students attending the University of Wisconsin-Stout. The participants all had the same English professor and were enrolled in English 102. The study assumes that the students received the same instruction being that the two sections both had the same professor. It is also assumed that the students had a solid knowledge of their texting and social media habits when they answered the questions on the survey since they did not have access to their cell phone bills at the time the survey was administered.

Conclusions

As seen in the previous studies done with younger children, no significant trends were shown linking texting and social media habits to bad writing. However, through the course of the study a relationship between multitasking and the idea of switching between multiple literacies coupled with negative academic performance did emerge. Among the students who performed poorly and/or who failed to turn in their assignments there was significant time spent text messaging, using social media or IMing. It is possible that this multitasking, particularly with electronic devices, directly influences student's tendencies toward unintentional plagiarism. Online it is common practice to "steal" something from one place and "share" it in another. With

this mentality being second-nature to them, the students may inadvertently be carrying this over to their academic work—especially if they are “sharing” online at the same time they are working on a formal essay for school.

The Multitasking Student. The phenomenon of the multitasking student is a growing epidemic. Students openly admit to multitasking, both during class and while doing homework. In the February 23, 2011 edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Ben Wieder writes about a survey of 1000 students from the University of New Hampshire noting that, “a majority felt guilty about sending a text message in class when they were not supposed to. Despite those feelings, 80 percent of the students said they normally send at least one text message in each of their classes.” These New Hampshire students are not alone. In the February 2010 PBS documentary *Digital Nation: Life on the Virtual Frontier*, producer Rachel Dretzin chronicles multitasking at prestigious institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Stanford. The piece gives numerous examples of students that claim they are quite successful at multitasking. However, the studies show otherwise. Extreme multitasking at MIT is dropping the level of academics at the school. At Stanford studies on multitasking show how the practice actually slows people down making them easily distracted as well as affecting their memory. These students are some of the brightest in the country, and even they are not immune to the detrimental effects of multitasking. Students are becoming dependent on having technology nearby. This trend is starting at younger and younger ages as well. Dretzin (2010) documents how technology use among youth in Korea is so heavy that there are treatment camps available to wean kids off their technology dependence.

Technology is continually expanding. As it does, the means of communication expands and shifts with it. In his book *The Dumbest Generation*, Mark Bauerline (2008) warns, “instead

of opening young American minds to the stores of civilization and science and politics, technology has contracted their horizon to themselves, to the social scene around them.” There is a plethora of information readily available through the use of technology. The trick is being able to strike a balance between it all in order to maintain consistency across all levels and forms of literacy.

Recommendations

Writing is a necessary survival skill for life. Kim Brooks (2011) writes, in her piece *Death to High School English*, how,

..even students who aren't going to stay in college need to know how to write. We've all gotten emails or cover letters where we've judged people based on the writing. It's not an essay but it's still communication and people fail at it all the time in profound and meaningful ways.

High school English teachers and college English professors alike are often charged with the task of teaching writing. With the attention span of students constantly being pulled in multiple directions, often from alluring technological devices, this instruction becomes more and more challenging. Without ignoring the technology many students use regularly, writing instruction follows an ever-changing path to keep students' interest piqued.

Technology in the classroom. Teachers are exploring new ways to incorporate technology in the classroom. While it might seem almost counterproductive to integrate the seeming source of the problem into the solution, some classrooms are piloting new ideas to engage the students through the technology. Tim Sohn (2011) writes in his piece *Prof: 'Engage Students Through Their Laptops*, how the University of Michigan is using an “interactive presentation tool called Lecture Tools, created by one of its own professors...the software is

designed to keep students engaged during presentations using laptops and smart phones, especially in large lectures.” The idea behind the use of this software is to keep students present in the lecture rather than drifting off into social networking sites. Implementation of software programs like this may provide a way to balance technology with instruction that discourages extreme multitasking but rather engages students directly. Also, the aforementioned professors using Twitter and Facebook with their college students are seeking to bridge the gap between the lofty towers of academia and the world of the undergraduate student.

Further research opportunities. There is a definite opportunity for more involved research addressing students’ technology habits, particularly related to multitasking, and their writing ability. A more detailed study involving a broader group of participants and more writing samples spanning a larger time frame in the students’ academic experience could reveal further useful data pertinent to technology and literacy.

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Appendix A: Participant Survey

Texting, Social Media and Literacy: Writing in the Collegiate Classroom Participant Survey

Name _____

Stout Email Address _____

1. How old are you? 18-22 23-29 30-39 Over 39 Prefer not to answer
2. Do you have a personal cell phone? Yes No
3. Does your cell phone plan include unlimited texting? Yes No
4. If your phone plan does not include unlimited texting, briefly describe what your plan does include: _____

5. How many years have you been texting?
Less than 1 1-2 3-4 5-6 7 or more
6. On average, how many texts do you send in a day?
Less than 25 25-50 50-99 100-149 150-249 250 or more
7. How many hours a day do you spend on Facebook?
Less than 1 1-3 4-6 7-9 10 or more
8. How many hours a day do you spend using instant messaging (either on Facebook or other applications)?
Less than 1 1-3 4-6 7-9 10 or more
9. How many hours a day do you use Twitter?
Less than 1 1-3 4-6 7-9 10 or more

Thank you for your time. Your assistance in this research study is greatly appreciated!

Appendix B: Argument Essay Data Table

Student Data		MS Word Readability Statistics											
		Paper 1 Counts				Paper 1 Averages				Paper 1 Readability			
Notes	Student Number	Words	Characters	Paragraphs	Sentences	Sentences per Paragraph	Words per Sentence	Characters per Word	Passive Sentences	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	Points out of 100	Grade Earned
	1	974	4652	8	44	6.2	22.1	4.6	22%	49	11.6	96	A
	2	742	3322	7	55	9.1	13.3	4.3	5%	75.7	5.9	75	C
	3	947	4545	5	62	12.4	15.2	4.6	6%	60.8	8.5	91	A-
Dropped	4	727	3513	5	36	7.2	20.1	4.7	33%	45.2	11.9	64	D
	5	916	4219	5	32	6.4	28.6	4.4	25%	55.6	12.1	94	A
	6	906	4312	7	48	6.8	18.8	4.6	20%	58.5	9.7	90	A-
	7	890	4554	13	37	6.1	23.6	4.9	24%	40.2	13.5	84	B
	8	934	4177	8	47	9.4	19.1	4.3	17%	67.8	8.5	75	C
	9	715	3417	5	33	6.6	21.6	4.6	21%	52.1	11.2	84	B
	10	724	3056	5	28	5.6	25.8	4.1	10%	66.5	10.1	80	B-
	11	847	3980	13	39	5.5	21.3	4.6	23%	61.5	9.9	100	A
	12	886	3980	9	52	5.7	17	4.3	17%	64.6	8.2	96	A
	13	786	3307	6	37	6.1	21.2	4.1	13%	70.9	8.2	86	B
	14	774	3563	6	45	7.5	17.2	4.4	22%	58.9	9.2	91	A-
	15	840	3790	4	47	11.7	17.8	4.4	8%	61.3	9.1	74	C
	16	957	4566	8	42	5.2	22.7	4.6	9%	62.5	10.2	94	A
	17	726	3215	7	31	4.4	23.4	4.3	12%	67.2	9	85	B
	18	789	3435	5	39	7.8	20.2	4.2	17%	68.3	8.7	81	B-
	19	1015	4440	6	54	9	18.7	4.2	22%	69.2	8.2	87	B+
No Paper-Dropped	20												F
	21	1008	4606	9	45	5.6	22.2	4.4	26%	65.2	9.5	100	A
	22	855	3544	5	30	6	28.5	4	30%	67.5	10.9	85	B
	23	909	4015	8	49	8.1	18.4	4.3	14%	66.7	8.3	87	B+
	24	718	2968	7	30	4.2	23.9	4	6%	75	8.7	89	B+
	25	757	3570	7	29	4.1	26.1	4.6	13%	53.5	11.8	89	B+
	26	825	3961	7	46	7.6	17.9	4.6	10%	62.6	8.9	99	A
	27	820	3605	6	42	7	19.5	4.3	7%	74.3	7.5	81	B-
	28	847	3794	7	50	7.1	16.9	4.3	8%	65.1	8.3	91	A-
	29	815	3554	5	42	8.4	19.4	4.2	9%	72	8	87	B+
	30	718	3263	6	30	6	23.8	4.4	23%	67.6	9.7	96	A

Appendix D: Survey Data Table

Student Number	How old are you?	Do you have a personal cell phone?	Does your cell phone plan include unlimited texting?	How many years have you been texting?	midpoints in datasets for average calculations	On average, how many texts do you send in one day?	midpoints in datasets for average calculations	How many hours a day do you spend on Facebook?	midpoints in datasets for average calculations	How many hours a day do you spend using instant messaging (either on Facebook or other applications)?	midpoints in datasets for average calculations	How many hours a day do you use Twitter?
1	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	150-249	199.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
2	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	25-50	37.50	4-6	5.00	1-3	2.00	<1
3	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
4	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	100-149	124.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
5	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	1-3	2.00	<1
6	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	<25	12.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
7	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	25-50	37.50	1-3	2.00	4-6	5.00	<1
8	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
9	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	<25	12.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
10	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
11	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
12	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	100-149	124.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
13	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	25-50	37.50	4-6	5.00	1-3	2.00	<1
14	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	150-249	199.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
15	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	25-50	37.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1

16	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
17	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
18	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	1-3	2.00	<1
19	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
20	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4		>250		4-6		4-6		<1
21	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	<25	12.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
22	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	50-99	74.50	4-6	5.00	1-3	2.00	<1
23	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	4-6	5.00	1-3	2.00	NA
24	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	1-3	2.00	1-3	2.00	<1
25	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
26	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
27	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	50-99	74.50	4-6	5.00	4-6	5.00	<1
28	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	<25	12.50	1-3	3.00	<1	0.50	<1
29	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	50-99	74.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
30	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	100-149	124.50	<1	0.50	<1	0.50	<1
31	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	150-249	199.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
32	18-22	Yes	Yes	3-4	3.50	<25	12.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
33	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
34	18-22	Yes	Yes	1-2	1.50	25-50	37.50	7-9	8.00	<1	0.50	<1
35	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	150-249	199.50	1-3	2.00	<1	0.50	<1
36	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	150-249	199.50	1-3	2.00	1-3	2.00	<1
37	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	<25	12.50	1-3	2.00	1-3	2.00	<1

38	18-22	Yes	Yes	5-6	5.50	25-50	37.50	4-6	5.00	<1	0.50	<1
Survey Averages:	18-22	Yes	Yes	4.36		74.39		2.27		1.11		<1

Appendix E: Correlations Data Table

AE-Charact ers per Word	AE-Flesch Readi ng Ease	AE-Flesc h- Kinca id Grad e Level	AE-Point s out of 100	RE- Wor ds	RE- Charact ers	RE- Paragra phs	RE- Senten ces	RE- Sentenc es per Paragra ph	RE- Words per Sentenc e	RE- Charact ers per Word	RE- Flesch Readi ng Ease	RE-Flesc h- Kinca id Grad e Level	RE- Point s out of 100	Years Texti ng	Texts Per Day	Hour s on FB	Hour s Imin g		
4.6	49	11.6	96	2143	10970	16	93	5.8	23	4.9	43.1	12.7	100	5.50	199.50	2.00	0.50		
4.3	75.7	5.9	75	2001	9670	20	157	10.4	12.4	4.6	61.9	7.6	50	3.50	37.50	5.00	2.00		
4.6	60.8	8.5	91	1921	9075	16	101	8.4	18.8	4.5	58.1	9.8	93	3.50	74.50	0.50	0.50		
4.4	55.6	12.1	94	2195	10459	15	79	6	27.5	4.6	48	12.7	79	3.50	74.50	2.00	2.00		
4.6	58.5	9.7	90	1827	8316	7	75	12.5	24.2	4.4	59.8	10.8	74	3.50	12.50	0.50	0.50		
4.9	40.2	13.5	84	1807	9427	7	51	7.2	35.4	5.1	24.3	18.3	69	3.50	37.50	2.00	5.00		
4.3	67.8	8.5	75	1835	9026	24	83	9.2	20.2	4.7	49	11.3	87	3.50	74.50	0.50	0.50		
4.6	52.1	11.2	84	1842	8251	13	83	6.3	22.1	4.3	59.6	10.2	63	5.50	12.50	2.00	0.50		
4.1	66.5	10.1	80	1816	8203	15	63	4.5	28.3	4.4	57.4	12.1	84	3.50	74.50	2.00	0.50		
4.6	61.5	9.9	100	1857	9246	12	89	7.4	20.8	4.8	48.4	11.5	81	5.50	37.50	0.50	0.50		
4.3	64.6	8.2	96	1852	8540	10	103	10.3	17.9	4.4	61.9	9	88	5.50	124.50	2.00	0.50		
4.1	70.9	8.2	86	1774	7822	9	80	8.8	22.1	4.3	66.8	8.9	64.5	3.50	37.50	5.00	2.00		
4.4	58.9	9.2	91	2032	9290	15	122	12.2	16.5	4.4	68.3	7.7	87	5.50	199.50	0.50	0.50		
4.4	61.3	9.1	74	1643	7945	8	90	11.2	18.2	4.7	57.7	9.7	0	3.50	37.50	0.50	0.50		
4.6	62.5	10.2	94	1885	8746	13	111	8.5	16.9	4.5	66.6	8.1	95	3.50	74.50	2.00	0.50		
4.3	67.2	9	85	1923	8662	18	100	7.1	19.1	4.3	62.6	9.1	76	3.50	74.50	2.00	0.50		
4.2	68.3	8.7	81	1824	7793	6	98	16.3	18.6	4.1	76.6	7.1	43	3.50	74.50	2.00	2.00		
4.2	69.2	8.2	87	1827	7984	6	87	14.5	21	4.2	67.6	8.8	54	5.50	74.50	2.00	0.50		
4.4	65.2	9.5	100	2225	10638	13	93	7.1	23.9	4.6	48.9	12.3	66	3.50	12.50	0.50	0.50		
4	67.5	10.9	85	2146	9887	13	89	6.8	24.1	4.5	56.3	11	93	5.50	74.50	5.00	2.00		
4.3	66.7	8.3	87	2077	9534	13	87	6.6	23.8	4.5	59.7	10.7	65	5.50	37.50	5.00	2.00		
4	75	8.7	89	1764	8020	10	71	7.8	24.7	4.4	54.9	11.6	66	5.50	37.50	2.00	2.00		
4.6	53.5	11.8	89	1881	8520	14	70	5	26.8	4.4	60.1	11.3	75.5	3.50	74.50	2.00	0.50		
4.6	62.6	8.9	99	1856	8948	9	90	10	20.6	4.7	60.7	9.9	95	5.50	37.50	0.50	0.50		
4.3	74.3	7.5	81	1816	8912	13	105	8	17.2	4.8	52.9	10.1	70.5	3.50	74.50	5.00	5.00		
4.3	65.1	8.3	91	1863	8930	12	115	9.5	16.1	4.6	57.2	9.2	61	3.50	12.50	3.00	0.50		
4.2	72	8	87	1949	9057	9	94	10.4	20.7	4.5	62	9.6	94	5.50	74.50	0.50	0.50		
4.4	67.6	9.7	96	1800	8943	13	90	6.9	20	4.8	44.5	12	95	3.50	124.50	0.50	0.50		
4.7	57.1	9.3	84	1804	8271	9	103	12.8	17.4	4.4	66.2	8.2	65	5.50	199.50	2.00	0.50		
4.5	56.4	11	88	1093	5393	6	48	9.6	22.7	4.8	48.3	12	76	3.50	12.50	2.00	0.50		
4.4	66.8	8.5	89	1839	8046	13	90	6.9	20.4	4.2	68.9	8.5	74	1.50	37.50	8.00	0.50		
4.4	61.5	11	80	1830	8244	16	72	7.2	25.1	4.4	58.8	11.3	84.5	5.50	12.50	2.00	2.00		
4.5	56	11.4	85	2030	9017	9	62	6.8	32.7	4.3	52.2	13.9	81	5.50	37.50	5.00	0.50		
<i>Column 6</i>	<i>Column 7</i>	<i>Column 8</i>	<i>Column 9</i>	<i>Column 10</i>	<i>Column 11</i>	<i>Column 12</i>	<i>Column 13</i>	<i>Column 14</i>	<i>Column 15</i>	<i>Column 16</i>	<i>Column 17</i>	<i>Column 18</i>	<i>Column 19</i>	<i>Column 20</i>	<i>Column 21</i>	<i>Column 22</i>	<i>Column 23</i>	<i>Column 24</i>	

1.00																		
-0.11	1.00																	
-0.25	-0.80	1.00																
0.73	0.50	-0.84	1.00															
0.09	0.27	-0.20	0.18	1.00														
0.10	-0.09	0.02	0.02	0.24	1.00													
0.08	0.10	-0.11	0.11	0.30	0.91	1.00												
0.03	-0.10	0.16	-0.13	-0.17	0.41	0.46	1.00											
-0.62	-0.14	0.44	-0.67	-0.01	0.37	0.35	0.37	1.00										
-0.59	-0.08	0.23	-0.47	-0.17	-0.26	-0.34	-0.45	0.34	1.00									
0.68	0.19	-0.53	0.76	0.04	0.09	0.09	-0.22	-0.84	-0.50	1.00								
0.05	0.41	-0.33	0.27	0.16	-0.10	0.31	0.11	-0.10	-0.29	0.12	1.00							
-0.37	-0.38	0.49	-0.56	-0.15	0.00	-0.34	-0.08	0.45	0.51	-0.56	-0.83	1.00						
0.56	0.34	-0.57	0.73	0.11	0.03	0.24	-0.06	-0.71	-0.57	0.85	0.58	-0.91	1.00					
0.29	0.13	-0.12	0.25	0.51	0.24	0.29	0.32	-0.10	-0.40	0.17	0.15	-0.20	0.21	1.00				
0.03	-0.04	-0.08	0.08	0.17	0.22	0.17	-0.15	-0.01	0.09	0.08	-0.06	0.04	0.02	0.22	1.00			
-0.13	0.08	-0.14	0.01	0.15	0.25	0.27	0.17	0.32	0.16	-0.26	0.03	0.10	-0.20	0.32	0.28	1.00		
0.02	-0.29	0.25	-0.17	-0.26	0.11	-0.03	0.04	0.09	-0.23	0.04	-0.26	0.19	-0.12	-0.11	-0.21	-0.18	1.00	
0.17	-0.05	0.02	0.08	-0.31	0.04	0.14	-0.08	-0.09	-0.10	0.26	0.32	-0.35	0.34	-0.15	-0.11	-0.16	0.36	1.00

Appendix F: Argument Essay Assignment and Rubric

Assignment for the Argument Essay

Write a 700-1,000 word argument essay for an audience that includes college students with views similar to yours and those with different views. Your essay should have the following features (as in Ballenger p 286):

- Focus your argument on one specific question – you can decide whether or not you want to state the question explicitly for your readers in the essay.
- Your question should relate to one of the following: your starting point reading, a related reading, or first-year composition at Stout.
- Your answer to the question will be the central claim of your argument. Organize the argument around that central claim.
- Support your claim with reasons. You should be able to list your reasons and state the assumption(s) that connect each reason to your central claim.
- Support each reason with evidence. Evidence consists of things like facts, examples, testimony, research, and statistics.
- Explain and comment on one or more counter-arguments offered by people who take a position different than yours on the debatable question.
- You should be able to explain how you used logos, pathos, and ethos to appeal specifically to the intended readers of your essay (college students).
- Use “I” in the essay in order to present your viewpoint.
- If you quote or paraphrase the ideas of other people, cite them using MLA format for in-text citations and the Works Cited. Otherwise, your essay will contain plagiarism and you will get a “D” or a “0” for the assignment.
- Give your essay a title that prepares the reader to recognize your central claim.
- Use MLA format throughout the essay (including the heading).
- Edit the final draft of your essay so that each paragraph is focused on one main idea and the sentences are free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.
- Before submitting your essay, underline your central claim and mark the counter-argument with a **colored font**.

Grading Rubric for the Argument Essay – 100 points total Score:

Required for Grading

Essays that do not meet these criteria will be returned without a grade. Students will have 24 hours to re-submit an improved essay. The grade for re-submitted essays will be limited to a B+.

The essay satisfies the length requirement– a minimum of 700 words and a maximum of 1000 words (excludes title and Works Cited).

Page 1 heading and page numbering follow MLA format. (See Hacker Handbook p 467.)

The essay has a title.

The central claim must relate to either the Starting Point reading or to first-year composition at Stout.

No plagiarism of any sort exists in the essay. (Properly cite any information that you found in a published source, including your Starting Point reading.) If limited plagiarism is found in an

essay that is otherwise satisfactory, the essay will receive a “D” grade. Otherwise an essay that contains plagiarism will receive a zero.

The essay will contribute 45 points to the overall essay grade as follows:

3 pts The title prepares the reader to recognize central claim of the argument

10 pts The central claim is clearly stated in a compelling way either at the beginning of the essay, or at the end (delayed thesis).

5 pts The all of the reasons listed in the essay guide are presented in the essay and are supported with sufficient, relevant evidence.

7 pts A counter-argument is discussed in a way that supports the central claim of the argument.

14 pts The essay shows logical organization

Each paragraph focuses on only one main idea. The main point is explained and elaborated in the paragraph. Everything in the paragraph belongs together.

The order of the paragraphs is logical and makes sense to a reader. A reader can find a connection from one paragraph to the next.

6 pts The essay avoids grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors

The essay has no

Run-on sentences or comma splices

Sentence fragments

The essay has very few

Confusing or unclear sentences

Grammatical errors

Misspellings

Missing commas before a coordinating conjunction

Missing commas after introductory phrase

Unnecessary commas

Unnecessary shifts in verb tense

Uses of the word “you” that refer to people in general or to the reader

Appendix G: Research Essay Assignment and Rubric

Major Writing Assignment #3: Research Essay Assignment

Write a 1800-2200 word research essay that answers a question related to a public event that has occurred in the last six months.

In seeking an answer to the question, you must use field research, library research, and your own knowledge. Use of the first person pronoun (“I”) is appropriate for expressing your answer to your research question. Chapters 11 -13 of the Ballenger textbook provide guidance for writing the research essay.

All essays written for this assignment will be collected into one volume – a kind of “year in review” - that may be read by future students in ENGL 102 and other members of the Stout community.

Format your paper and cite your sources following APA style. The details of APA style are provided in the Hacker Handbook and in the Ballenger textbook on pages 575-593.

Rhetorical Situation: You are providing an answer to a question that other people might also have about the event or a related issue.

Purpose: to provide one college student’s perspective on a public event or issue

Audience: College students, faculty, staff, administrators who are interested in the event or a related issue.

Required Elements:

1. Summarize the event. Explain why it has public interest (Identify who cares about the event or is affected by it.) Due at the beginning of class on **April 14**
2. Identify a problem or controversy related to the event and formulate a research question. Do this in class on April 14.
3. Find out what others have said about the answer to your question. Identify prominent voices. Annotated bibliography is due on **April 21**.
4. Do field research to find out what students or a local expert thinks about the issue. Describe your method of collecting this data, and summarize what you discover. Complete the field research **by April 28**.
5. State your answer to the research questions as the thesis or central claim of your essay. Explain your own answer to the question and how it relates to other peoples’ views. Evaluate the other views. Use your annotated bibliography and field research to support your thesis and your opinion of other peoples’ views. **Due May 10**
6. Include a graphic and a title. Do this in class on **May 10**.
7. Use APA style for the paper format and for the citation of sources.

ENGL 102 Research Essay: Choosing an Event and Finding a Research Question

Choose a public event that has occurred within the last six months and attracted your attention. Choose an event that intrigues you. Other people must also have noticed and written about the event.

Examples of Public Events

Tsunami in Japan

Shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords

WI state budget bill

Controversy over student housing and retail development in downtown Menomonie

A campus event covered in the *Stoutonia* student newspaper

Popular culture event (related to sports, movies, music, TV)

Some private events may have a connection to public interest. For example, your sister may have had a baby in February, and this event has really grabbed your attention. However, because few people outside your immediate family will have noticed or written about this event, it would not be a good topic for the researched essay. Yet you could still write about this event *if* you can present it as an event that is common to many people in our society. Other people may not have noticed the birth of your sister's child, but many people in our country have thought and written about issues related to childbirth, babies, or motherhood. For example, maybe your sister gave her child an unusual name, and you are curious about how naming practices have changed over the last century in the US. Or, maybe your sister talked with you about the birth, and you have become curious about the way technology is used in the birth process today compared to how it was used when you were born.

Do some online research using reliable news sources to refresh your memory about the event. Write a description of the event, citing sources of information as necessary.

Next, find one aspect of the event that you are curious about. What questions do you have that relate to this event? Continue to read and think about the event until you come up with a question that makes you genuinely curious and that will require a bit of research to answer. You are seeking a "researchable question" as described by Ballenger on p 456. A key aspect of a researchable question is that it "leads to controversies, debates or disagreements among knowledgeable people" (456).

Researchable questions may focus on the significance of an event. How did the event affect people? What were significant causes of the event? What is an important consequence or response that has followed the event?

Another approach to finding a researchable question would be to think about problems related to the event. Did the event solve a problem? Cause a problem?

A third approach to finding a researchable question is to ask who cares? Who else is interested in this event? Why do they care about it? Do people disagree about any aspects of this event? This line of thinking may help you to discover a researchable question.

Grading Rubric for Research Essay

Due May 16 100 points total & 8 possible bonus points Contributes 20% to your course grade

Plagiarism is a hazard for writers of research papers. Avoid unintentional plagiarism by using APA style to properly cite any information or ideas that you obtained from a published source. The plagiarism detector “turnitin” may be used to evaluate your essay. If limited plagiarism is found in an essay that is otherwise satisfactory, the essay will receive a “D” grade. Otherwise an essay that contains plagiarism will receive a zero.

Required for Grading

Essays that do not meet these criteria will be returned without a grade. Students will have 24 hours to re-submit an improved essay. The grade for re-submitted essays will be limited to a B+.

The essay satisfies the length requirement– a minimum of 1800 words and a maximum of 2200 words (excludes title and References).

The paper follows APA format and includes a references section. (See the sample paper in the Hacker Handbook pp 514-528.)

The essay is double-spaced.

The essay has a title that highlights the problem or issue that the essay will discuss.

The essay has a graphic.

The essay will contribute 75 points to the overall project grade as follows:

15 pts The essay answers a question that can be answered in different ways by different people. It is not just a question about facts. The essay does more than simply report what is written in books and articles. Most of the essay is devoted to explaining the writer’s thinking and opinions about an open-ended research question.

10 pts The heart of the writer’s answer to the research question is clearly stated in a compelling way as the thesis or central claim of the essay. The central claim is underlined.

15 pts The writer compares and contrasts his or her own views with the views of other people.

12 pts The writer clearly shows whether the ideas in a sentence come from the writer or from primary research or from a library or internet source. The writer identifies the views of others by citing their names and summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting what they have said.

8 pts The essay refers to the results of field research

9 pts The essay shows logical organization

Each paragraph focuses on only one main idea. The main point is explained and elaborated in the paragraph. Everything in the paragraph belongs together. (3 pts)

The first or second sentence in a paragraph indicates what the main idea of the paragraph is. (3 pts)

The order of the paragraphs is logical and makes sense to a reader. A reader can find a connection from one paragraph to the next. (3 pts)

8 pts The essay avoids grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors

No sentence fragments were noticed in the essay.

Run-on sentences or comma splices

Sentence fragments

Few of the following types of errors were noticed in the essay

Run-on sentences or comma splices

Confusing or unclear sentences

Grammatical errors

Misspellings

Missing commas before a coordinating conjunction

Missing commas after introductory phrase

Unnecessary commas

Unnecessary shifts in verb tense

Uses of the word “you” that refer to people in general or to the reader

8 pts Use of Sources

In-text citations are in APA format

References are in APA format at the end of the essay. The References begins on a new page.

Related assignments will contribute 25 points to the overall project grade as follows:

5 pts Description of a public event that has occurred within the last six months - Due on April 14

10 pts Annotated Bibliography – Due on April 26 (due date extended)

5 pts Description of field research methods and summary of results – Due on May 3

5 pts Sketch of the essay – Due on May 10

Bonus Points

5 pts Conference with Dr. Hanson about the essay

3 pts Bonus points earned on quiz on April 14