

9.97 Million Words Later: What a Four-
Year Study of Writing Tells DU and
Higher Education

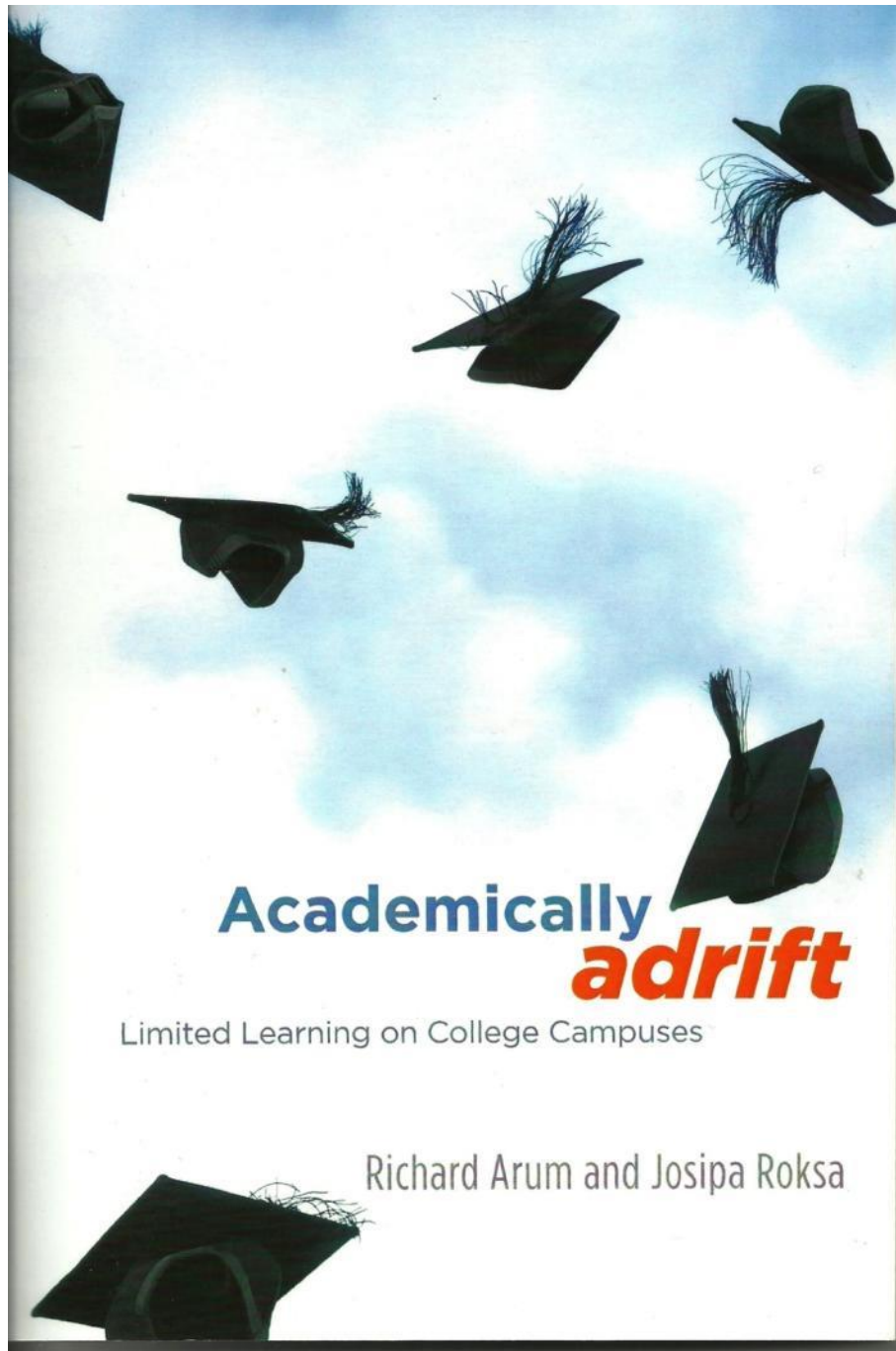
Doug Hesse
2011 Provost's Lecture

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34	S08	DNA in Foren							
35	S08	Eugenics							
36	S08	Flame's Femi							
37	S08	Mean Girls	3	4	5	7	2	4	
38	S08	A Case Study	9	1	1	7	2	4	11
39	F07	Comp Imm Re	3	1	1	7	1	4	
40	F07	A Personal Me	1	4	1	7	2	4	1
41	F07	"Rabbits" Pres	1	4	1	7	5	1	1
42	F07	Term Paper O	1	5	1	1	5	4	2
43	F07	America's Clin	6	1	1	7	1	4	

DH: You noted relatively less analysis back then than in your writing now. I wonder, is that because, you think, the assignments have changed, or you've changed? I know that's a hard question.

"Ava": No, that's interesting. I think I've always had a slight problem with teachers telling me that I don't analyze enough in papers – even in high school. So that's something I've been continually trying to improve on.

I think part of it is the type of assignments. In my freshman seminar, I was not writing 15 page papers, 70 pages papers about anything.



“We observe no statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills for at least 45 percent of the students in our study” (36).



Amy Kho



Jennifer Campbell



Richard Colby



Kelli Custer



Rebekah Schulz
Colby



Eliana Schonberg

My Colleagues on
the Research Team



John Tiedemann

Method

In 1 minute

Relax. There's a handout.



The University of Denver Longitudinal Study of Undergraduate Writing

Jennifer Campbell, Richard Colby, Kelli Custer,
Doug Hesse, Eliana Schouberg,
Rebekah Shultz-Colby, John Tiedemann

Writing Research Across Borders, George Mason Univ.
February 19, 2011

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<http://www.du.edu/writing>

About the University of Denver

"A great private university dedicated to the public good."
—University Vision Statement

The University of Denver, the oldest independent university in the Rocky Mountain region (founded in 1864), enrolled about 11,600 students in fall 2010. Of these about 5,300 are undergraduates, with a first year class of about 1250. 43% of first year students come from Colorado, the rest from 50 states and 52 countries. The Carnegie Foundation classifies DU, with 6,300 graduate students (over half) as a Doctoral/Research University. *U.S. News* ranks DU 86th among national universities. The student/faculty ratio is 10:1, and 2010-11 tuition is \$35,600. DU awards more than \$91 million in financial assistance. DU is a traditional residential campus of 125 acres with expansive green spaces and views of the nearby Rocky Mountains, located in a residential neighborhood southeast of downtown Denver.

Scope, Participants, Methods, Purpose

In spring 2007 we began collecting data from a group of first year students at the University of Denver whose writing, writing experiences, and writing attitudes we would follow and interpret until graduation. Our goals were fairly open-ended: describe the amounts and kinds of writing and writing experiences of DU undergrads and interpret the effects and implications of what we learned. From all the students enrolled in WRIT 1133, the spring quarter required writing course, we randomly selected 130 students whom we invited to participate in the study. About 95 of them came to an information meeting, and most of them enrolled. However, only about 80 actually completed all phases from the first year. We then invited a second randomly selected cohort of 30 students enrolled in first year seminars in fall 2008. In exchange for a \$75 honorarium paid each quarter (increased to \$95 in years 3 and 4), participants agreed to complete a quarterly questionnaire, upload writings, and be interviewed annually. About 75 students provided data for multiple quarters. In the end, however, 44 of the spring 2007 cohort and 10 of the fall 2008 cohort completed the study (the latter group still in progress.)

Element 1: The Questionnaire

Each quarter, students complete a detailed online questionnaire that asks them about the kinds of writing and writing instruction they're doing in each of their courses that quarter. The questions have varied slightly, but the fundamental core has stayed the same. Below is a recent version of the questionnaire. There are a few open-ended questions, but students mostly choose from answers. In order to save space on this handout, we've not provided all the choices. However, you can find them at www.du.edu/writing. We also prepared a special set of questions for graduating seniors, which you can see at that site.

- 1 What is your major?
- 2 How many credits have you earned at DU?



Questionnaires



Texts

Interviews

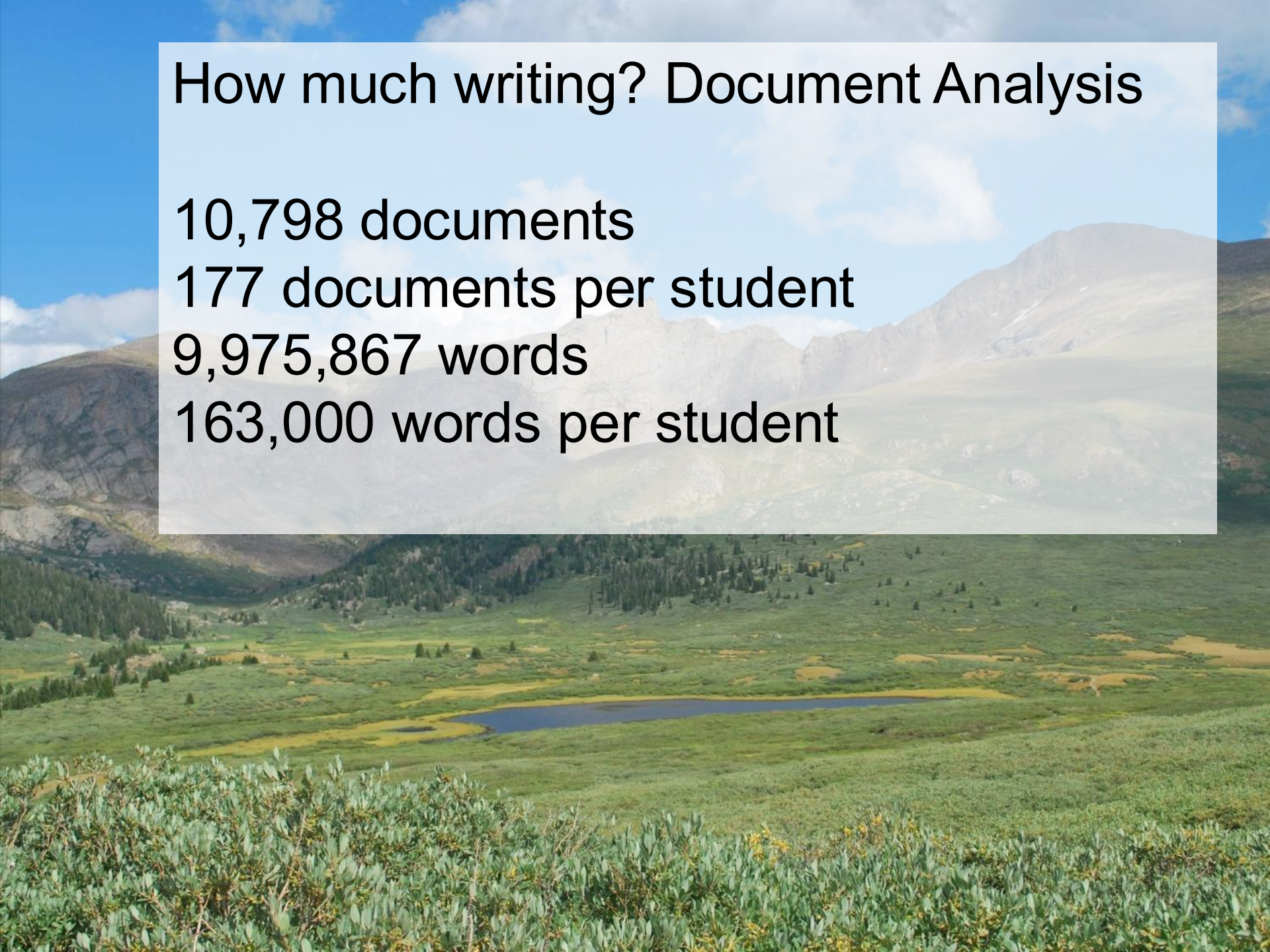
How much writing? Document Analysis

10,798 documents

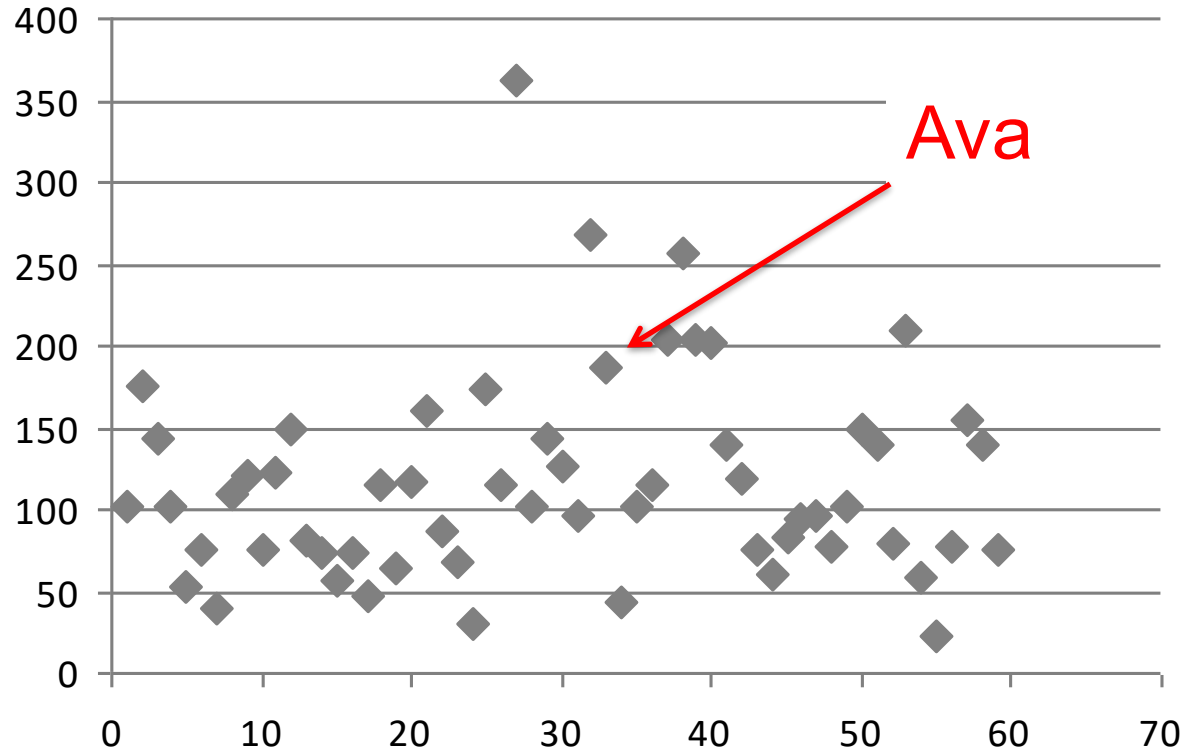
177 documents per student

9,975,867 words

163,000 words per student



Number of Uploads



All Completing Students: Average=117 per student / Median=102

Spring 2007 Cohort: Average=123 per student / Median=115
(nearly all have graduated)

Genre



	All	Fall 07	Spring 10
	%	%	%
Essayistic Writing	24	19	30
Conventionalized Reports	12	16	11
Testing	13	17	8
Facilitate Learning	21	18	21
Support Research Projects	8	6	8
Assigned Multimedia	2	2	4
Assigned Creative	2	2	1
Self-sponsored Writings	2	3	2
Other Correspondence	3	3	3
Other Symbolic Forms	3	1	10
Language not English	10	8	1
Other	1	4	<1

Sources



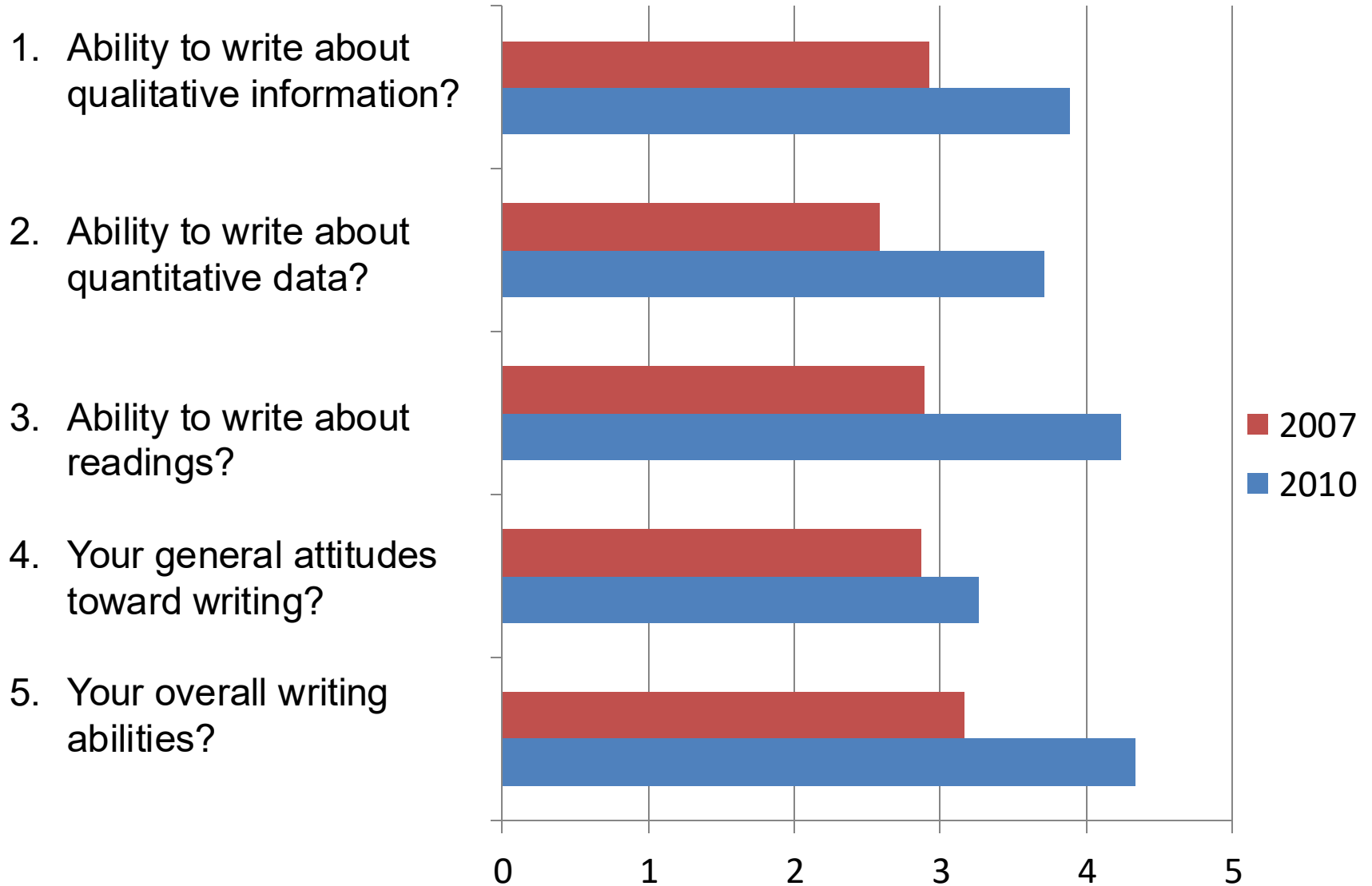
	All	Fall 07	Fall 09
	%	%	%
Reading	38	38	40
Quantitative Data	12	14	12
Qualitative Data	6	8	6
Experience or Opinion	12	12	15
Other Artifacts	8	8	8
Other or Undeterminable	15	29	19

Purpose



	All	Fall 07	Spring 10
	%	%	%
Report, Describe, Synthesize	34	41	30
Interpret, Analyze, Apply	18	20	17
Respond	13	11	15
Argue	5	5	7
Mixed	24	16	23
Other Purposes	8	6	6

Self Reported Abilities and Attitudes



Kathleen

Like most papers, I wrote it the day before, but I got a good grade. I got a 95 or something. I was pleasantly surprised by that.

Karen: “I feel like I haven't really gotten feedback on my writing since freshman year. I don't know how I compare. The only thing that I know about my writing, the only reason that I, sort of, kind of know where I might be is from doing group projects and reading other people's stuff...”

Interviewer: “Do you feel like you’ve learned anything new about writing in the past year?”

Karen: “No.”

Interviewer: “Why do you suppose that is?”

Karen: “I think it's just because I don't ever get feedback on my writing. And most of the time when I turn in writing, it's at the end of the quarter and it's just done.”

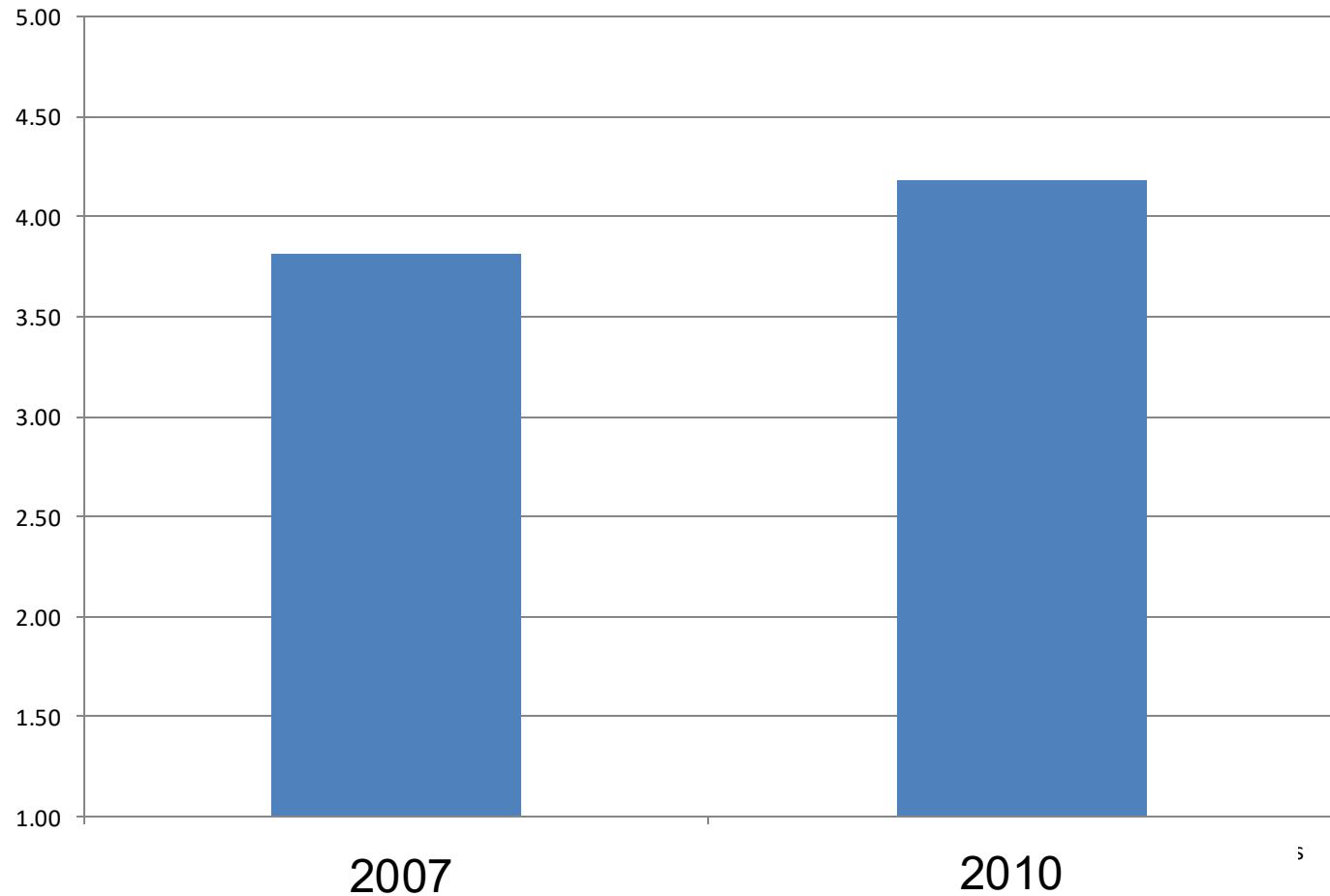
Characterization of beliefs about writing

(5) I definitely believe writing can be taught.

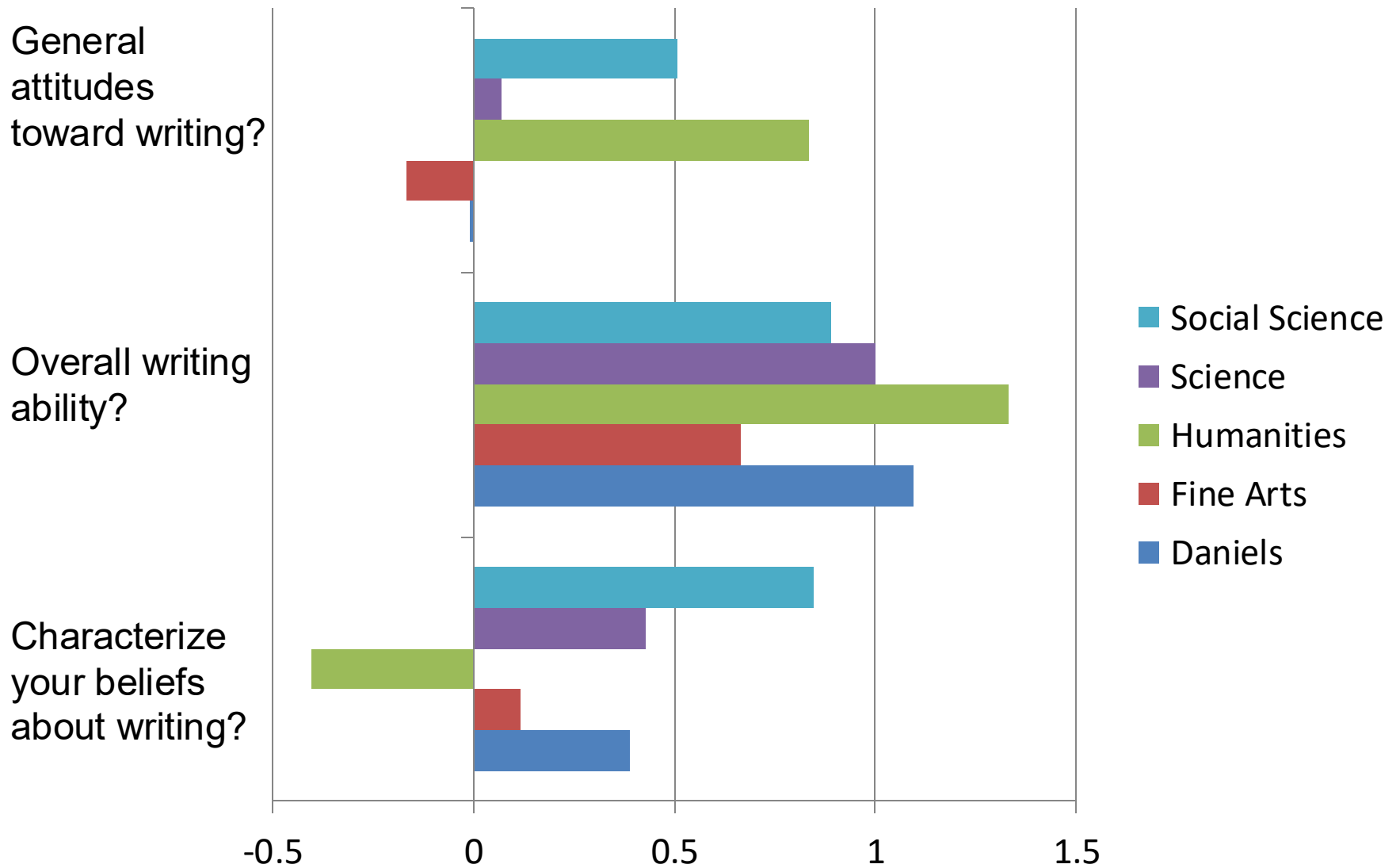
(4) I believe that most writing can be taught, but not all.

(3) I believe that some writing can be taught.

(2) I believe that only a few things about writing can be taught...



2007 – 2010 Mean Difference in Self Reported Abilities and Attitudes (Major)



Most Valuable Experiences + Favorite Writings

Site of Experience

Majors Course	48	36%
ASEM or Core (not WIC)	22	17%
Writing Intensive Core	15	11%
WRIT Course	16	12%
Study Abroad	9	7%
Language Course	7	5%
Course can't be determined	9	7%
Non school writing	7	5%

Source: Stimulated recall in final interviews

Total Mentions: 133

44 students



Most Valuable Experiences + Favorite Writings

Reason Why Valuable or Favorite

Strategies (either practical or new)	47	30%
Topic	30	19%
Professor	25	16%
Freedom	22	14%
Learning	20	13%
Challenge	10	6%
Easy	3	2%

Source: Stimulated recall in final interviews

Total Mentions: 157

44 students



Olga

[I]t was one of the best writing exercises that I've had, because you actually have real life experience, rather than a lot of things like case studies, and you feel like you're talking to the wind and you don't really make a difference.'

Linda

The assignment was to write like we had been commissioned by the Smithsonian to put together an exhibit that was divided into three eras that represented The West as a whole. It was just really kind of fun to think about it in that way, and it was more creative than other stuff I've done.

Lara

Professor C also provided an insane amount of feedback (laughter). It was a progressive paper, so we studied one aspect of housing and then wrote a section on it, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, so we had like a 15 page paper about our home, but every single section we turned into him and he gave us feedback, so we got to go back and edit it, every single time.

Steve

[My favorite] was my marketing plan for North Face. It was really long, like 60 pages long. It was one of the most valuable pieces to me because I could use that towards employers, and they'll be like, "Oh okay so you have marketing experience."

It sucked. It was a miserable paper. We had to write about a scenario that didn't exist. And we had to create laws that didn't exist. . . . When international law itself is not clear, it's even harder to write a paper about it, you know?

Josh, Music

The Beatles Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. It got so technical. I didn't even listen to the CD—I had never heard it before. I never liked the Beatles, and never listened. I just read a book; they did what's called a Schenker analysis, which is this mathematical analysis. . . . [It] could have been good if it was "listen to Sgt. Pepper's" and then asked my interpretation instead of "read this 50-60 page incredibly technical manual. . . . and then incorporate that into your writing."

Foster

“I had to write a research paper about President Bush and how his faith in God affected his foreign policy, especially dealing with the Middle East. The reason why I liked it so much was because it was a pretty big assignment of doing something where faith and politics cross . . . We had to come up with our own topic; do research entirely on our own... I feel like when I got done writing it, it was definitely my own piece, and it wasn't like the teacher was going to be reading the exact same paper 20 times over.”

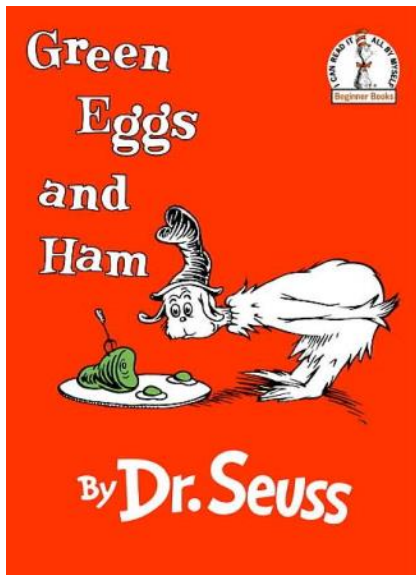
So, what's the better piece of writing?

#1

I do not like them,
Sam I am. I do not
like green eggs
and ham.

#2

The main purpose of this paper is to offer a somewhat novel theory of deep democracy and economic justice. Part of the novelty consists in considering radical uncertainty and indeterminacy under postmodern conditions.



Better how?

Purpose?
Audience?
Knowledge?
Ambition?
Expertise?


[A THEORY OF DEEP DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF POSTMODERNISM.](#) 📄

By: **KHAN, HAIDER A.** Contemporary Readings in Law & Social Justice, 2009, Vol. 1 Issue 1, p47-72, 26p

Subjects: DEMOCRACY; ECONOMIC justification; POSTMODERNISM; COMMON good; SELF-determination, National; SKEPTICISM; NIHILISM; POLITICAL doctrines; HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770-1831

Database: Academic Search Complete

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Results:

The CR1 transposon sequence within “Sequence A” was found using the BLAST program on the NCBI website. The exact expected size of the PCR amplification product, using the primers specified, is 204 base pairs. The forward primer was WALLE. Its sequence is GTGCAAAGGGAATTATAGCACCC, which is the compliment of the first flanking region. Furthermore, the reverse primer was named EVE. The nucleotide sequence was ACCACCTTGCTGTACCTCTA, which is the compliment of the other DNA strand on a double stranded DNA (the strand now shown). Both primers are shown in Figure 1.

```
AAGGTGCAAAGGGAATTATAGCACCCCTTACACTACCTATGGGGGGGATA  
CAAAGAAGACAGCAGCAGACTCTTATCAATGTTGCACAATAAAAAGTCA  
AGAGACATAGGCCCCAGGTTTCAGCAATTGAAACTCTAATTTGATATT  
AGGAATTCCTTATTCCCCCCTAGCAGTGTTACAAATAGAGATAGAGG  
TACAGCAAGGTGGTGGAACCTTGGTCCCTTGTGATTTTCCAGTCTCGG  
CTGAACTNTTCCCAGTGAACCTGTATTTTATTTTGAGGTTTCTCCTGCT  
CTGAGC
```

Figure 1. Nucleotide “Sequence A” with the identified CR1 sequence and flanking forward and reverse primers. The CR1 sequence is indicated in bold and italicized text. The forward primer, WALLE is indicated in red and underlined. The reverse primer, EVE, is indicated in blue and underlined.

Arpeetha

Small Section
of a
Microbiology
Lab Report

Arpeetha: Part of an Application

Essay 3 - Describe an ethical dilemma that you have encountered. Explain alternatives you considered and how you determined the best action to take. (150 words or fewer)

. . . [T]he application asks for one's race. I feel that it is unnecessary to ask for this because I should be assessed according to my talent or academics, but I also want to reap the benefits of being a minority. There is always an option of "prefer not to answer," but I would not like to do that either. This question is exasperating because I feel that I am an American first, and this American happens to be [*redacted—DH*]. It may be unethical to answer this question solely to gain financial or other benefits. I do not want to be selfish, but I do not want to be incorrect

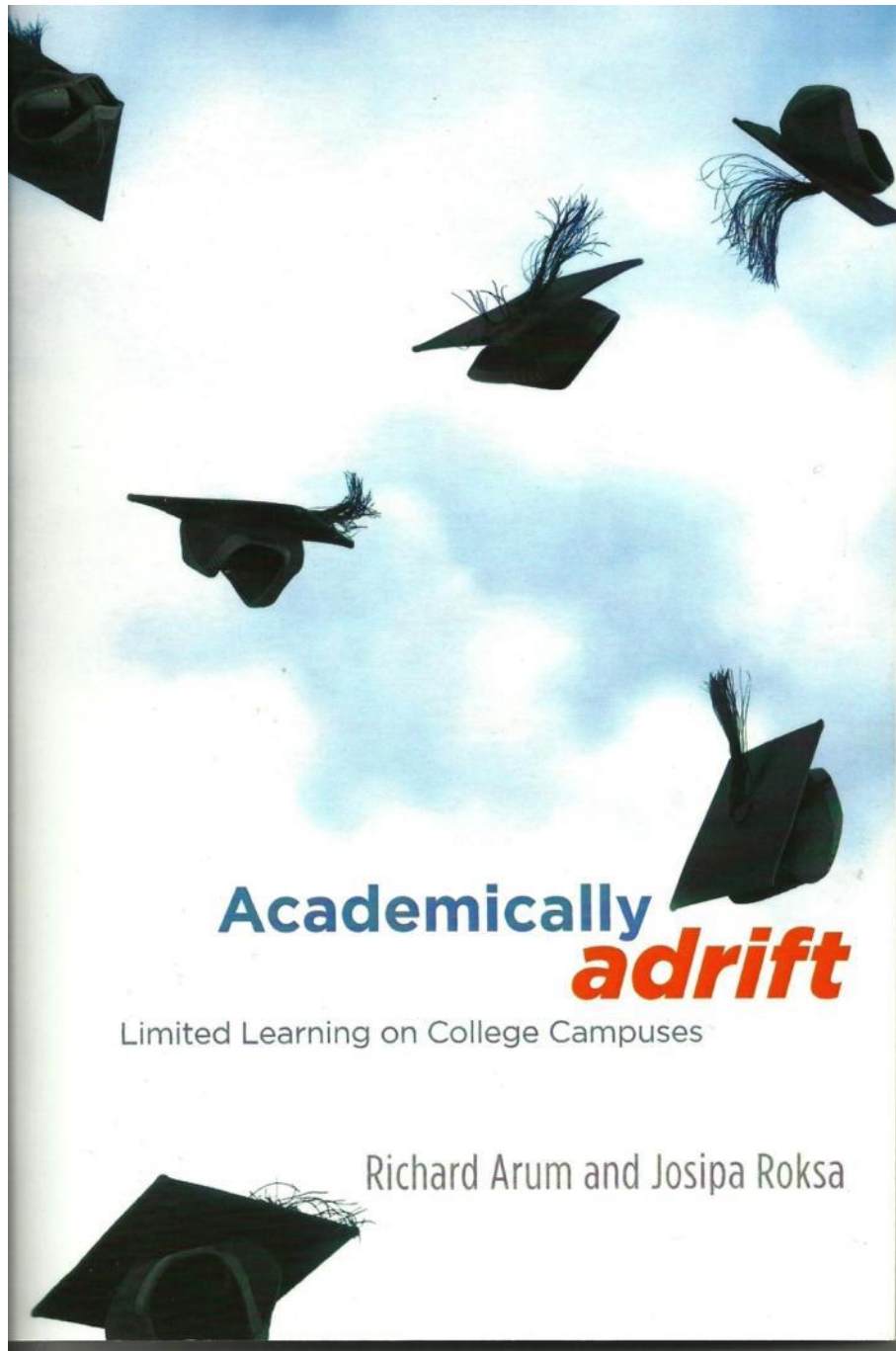
Kara

[on internship at a law firm]

Judges, they don't want three fully developed paragraphs; they want A, B, C, listed out, bullet points are great. . . . Get to the point. Precise arguments. . . . They'd be like, "It's redundant." So you'd be like [laughs] But that was the biggest difference for me: changing from pleasing a professor to pleasing a judge.

. . .

I had to learn how to do business writing; I had to learn how to do writing for the theater; I had to do writing for CRIM. . . . And so my little gem of knowledge would be: Don't stick to one type. Get as much as you can. Take the good with the bad. And then incorporate that into your everyday writing.



Not at DU.

But we could chart
more ambitious
voyages.

**We should be
more intentional.**



Conversations in the Disciplines

Bringing Faculty and Students Together to Discuss Research and Writing

The University Writing Program is pleased to present an evening of discussion about research and writing across disciplines to support the goals of WRIT 1133, 1633, and 1733. Faculty from several fields will make brief presentations about the research and writing strategies, followed by plenty of time for student questions and conversation among panelists and audience members.

Wednesday, April 13
6:30 – 8:00 pm
Sturm 251

Danny McIntosh, Psychology

Dr. McIntosh's research examines influences on emotional experience, with particular focus on interpersonal processes in emotion and the role of religion in coping. He teaches in the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Psychology Department and is the Director of the University Honors Program.

Joan Winn, DCB

Dr. Winn has conducted research on business turnarounds, entrepreneurship and strategic positioning, discrimination and harassment, international

Seth Masket, Political Science

Dr. Masket studies American political parties at the state and national level. His book *No Middle Ground* (University of Michigan Press, 2009) examines the alliances and officeholders that today function as unofficial helping their preferred candidates win nominating conventions, preventing others from doing so. He teaches courses on campaigns, parties, film, and state and local politics.

Hava Gordon, Department of Sociology and Criminology

Dr. Gordon's research has explored how multiple social inequalities together shape youth political movements, and is the subject of her recent book, *We Fight to Win: Inequality and the Politics of Youth Activism*, as well as multiple journal articles. Her current research focuses on community struggles over urban school reform.

6:30 – 8:00 pm
Sturm 248

Bonnie Clark, Anthropology

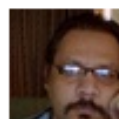
A professional archaeologist since 1990, Dr. Clark's work has focused on using the tangible past-- artifacts, architecture, settlement patterns--to tell a more inclusive history of western North America. Dr. Clark's research interests include the relationships between material culture, ethnicity, and gender; cultural landscapes; and the politics of heritage management. She is the author of a forthcoming book (Fall 2011) *On the Edge of Purgatory: An Archaeology of Place in Hispanic Colorado*.

William Philpott, History

Dr. Philpott's teaching and research passions lie in the field of environmental history—the history of people's interaction with the nonhuman world. That includes everything from the history of energy, eating, and resource use to "natural" disasters and the spread of "invasive" species; from the ever-complicated politics of property and environmental protection to the rich history of cultural ideas about nature and humans' place in it.

**We should expand our sense
of composing.**

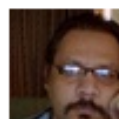




ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

@m0hcin the few people online at this time of the night are saying one of the copters was not Pakistani...

1 May



ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

@m0hcin <http://bit.ly/ljB6p6> seems like my giant swatter worked !

1 May



ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

@m0hcin all silent after the blast, but a friend heard it 6 km away too... the helicopter is gone too.

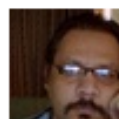
1 May



ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

A huge window shaking bang here in Abbottabad Cantt. I hope its not the start of something nasty :-S

1 May



ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

Go away helicopter - before I take out my giant swatter :-/

1 May



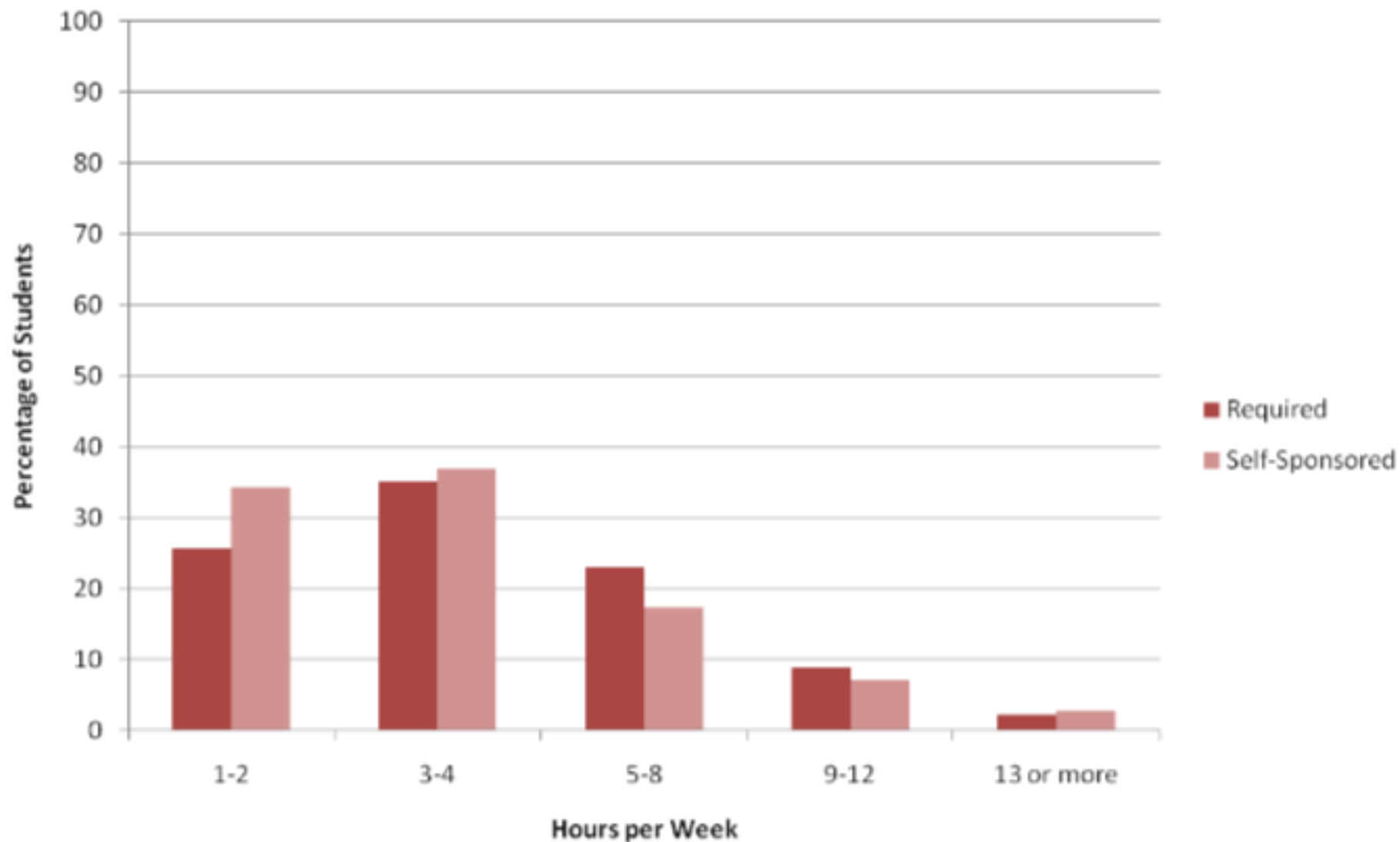
ReallyVirtual Sohaib Athar

Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1AM (is a rare event).

1 May



Hours per Week Devoted to Required vs. Self-Sponsored Writing



LEARNING FROM **YOUTUBE**

by Alexandra Juhasz • design by Craig Dietrich

YouTours ▾ Tags ▾ Voice ▾

YOUTUBE IS ...

Glossary



texteo: A page in this publication that expresses meaning through the integration of design, written text, and video (text+video=texteo).



YouTube is the subject, form, method, problem and solution of this **video-book**.

Welcome! You can begin by taking a **YouTour** of sixteen **texteos** that briefly introduce what "YOUTUBE IS."

Or you can start with the **HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO BOOK YouTour** for step-by-step instructions about navigating **LFYT**, for example:

Siena Pinney

Kamila Kinyon

The Rhetoric of Documentary

2/4/11

Exit Through the Gift Shop

Exit Through the Gift Shop, released in 2010, is part of the recent “street art” movement, directed by Banksy. However the star of the film turns out not to be Banksy, but a shopkeeper who becomes obsessed with filming street art. In the opening scene Banksy declares the movie is about “me.” The irony of the film is that Banksy is the filmmaker. “He was actually a lot more interesting than me.” The film takes us on a journey that shows us the street art scene as seen through the eyes of an obsessed camera operator, an intriguing and entertaining one that has appeal for many viewers, especially those interested in art or film. *Exit Through the Gift Shop's* fulfills several of the functions of documentary film, as identified by film scholar Michael Renov, its main



Fire in Gold Hill

by Siena Pinney
1 month ago



This is a student documentary about the wildfire on September 6th, 2010 in Gold Hill. It tells the story of the people who were affected by the fire, especially those who lost their homes. This film is for them.

an intriguing and entertaining one that has appeal for many viewers, especially those interested in art or film. *Exit Through the Gift Shop's* fulfills several of the functions of documentary film, as identified by film scholar Michael Renov, its main



**3940 words later,
thanks.**