FIRST-YEAR WRITING PROGRAMS AT
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, “First-year Writing Programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” presents the results and findings of an IRB-approved case study on African American English in the first-year composition classroom at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The goals of my research are to determine the subject matter and curriculum for first-year writing programs at HBCUs and to examine how their first-year writing courses reflect their institution’s mission statement. I also explore how teachers and students address features of African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition in their writing assignments. This study demonstrates the importance of a culturally-relevant pedagogy for first-year writing courses at HBCUs.

For this case study, I analyzed mission statements, course syllabi, assignment sheets, and student essays and conducted interviews with students and instructors. Based on the results of the case study, I argue that the first-year writing courses at these HBCUs do align with their institution’s mission statements. I also posit that the first-year writing students in this case study have an unclear understanding of African American English; thus, more conversations are needed in the first-year writing classroom to help African American students value and appreciate their language as they learn the academic discourse and use Standard American English.

With my research, I discuss how the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s Students’ Right to their Own Language resolution is not being totally fulfilled in the first-year writing classroom. Thus, I urge first-year composition instructors to re-think
what constitutes Standard English and how attitudes toward language affect student identity.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through which all things are possible; my mother and father, Mary and Darrell James; my paternal grandparents, Irene and John James; and my late maternal grandmother, Lavern McCune.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In August of 2001, I entered the historic gates of Tougaloo College, a small liberal arts and historically Black college in Tougaloo, Mississippi, near Jackson, Mississippi. I declared my major as English with an emphasis in journalism because I had always been told I was a good writer and public speaker. As a first-year writing student with a strong ACT score, I was enrolled in Effective Communication, an honors English course, rather than Effective Writing. It was an honor that made me proud but nervous. I soon heard the stories around campus about the legendary English professors like Dr. Jerry Ward, Dr. Candice Love-Jackson, and Dr. Miranda Freedom, and the late Dr. Annie Cistrunk. According to what I was told, these professors would give me hell—but “good” hell, if there is such a thing. I was also enrolled in Mission Involvement, a course that all Tougaloo first-year students took in order to ease the transition to college and help students understand themselves and the new environment. On Wednesdays, all first-year students attended convocation, and on Fridays we attended “Friday forums”. At these weekly events, we could expect to hear a presentation from African Americans in the community from a variety of fields and disciplines: attorneys, civil rights movement participants, or even African drummers. By attending these events, I grew as a person, as a student, and as an African American woman. Friday Forums further encouraged the development of writing skills, as we also had to write about these events and speakers, and I even remember putting together my family tree, which helped me learn more about my culture and my history.
In 2005, I graduated from Tougaloo College and attended Kansas State University for my Master’s degree. I received a graduate teaching assistantship and began teaching first-year writing there. As I taught English 100 and English 200, I realized that those students were writing about different subjects than what I wrote about at Tougaloo. For example, the first-year students at Kansas State were writing about issues in the news, such as the censorship of certain novels in the classroom, and these students were also learning about the Toulmin model, something I had just learned during my practicum teaching sessions. At Kansas State University, the first-year writing students wrote about a variety of issues, engaged a wide range of texts, and wrote assignments for different genres, such as the evaluation essay, summary and strong response paper, believer and doubter assignment (one essay in favor of an issue and another essay against the issue), and the proposal assignment. As a first-year writing student at Tougaloo, I wrote about my culture and family and literature and poetry; one of my major essays for the course was on Lord Byron. At Tougaloo, we also spent a good amount of time on vocabulary words. Thus, I wondered about the differences between writing instruction at HBCUs and predominantly white institutions (PWIs). I knew that I had to research the subject of writing at HBCUs. I had to find the time to explore that project. Seven years later, that time is now.

As I began engaging with the scholarship for this project, I realized that much of the research on first-year writing does not address teaching composition at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). In addition, I feel that African American English speakers who attend HBCUs are often overlooked in the literature of our field. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean Williams’ analysis of the history of composition reviewed the foundational texts that aim to help define composition, such as those written by Stephen North, James Berlin, and Albert Kitzhaber, and found that these texts do not cover the pedagogical approaches at African
American colleges and universities (565). Royster and Williams argue that Susan Miller’s
*Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition* “acknowledges the existence of other
viewpoints, but does not craft a space, for example, for the voices of people of color” (566).
Royster and Williams also point out that in *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American
College, 1875-1925*, John Brereton realizes that the perspectives of African American educators
and their conversations about writing instruction are absent (566). Brereton writes that “most
black colleges seem to have taught writing in strict accord with the standards of white America”
(21). These scholars only touch the surface when discussing African Americans and writing
instruction but never actually fill that space. Because I am interested in exploring the subject
matter and the curriculum of writing programs at HBCUs, I examine these claims about the
structure of writing programs and hope to bring this topic to the forefront. My research helps fill
the gap in research pertaining to the narratives of first-year writing at historically Black colleges
and universities and explores the attitudes toward African American English at HBCUs. This
chapter will cover the historical context and purpose of HBCUs, as well as African American
education, in general, and the journey to literacy for African Americans. Chapter One provides a
survey of literature on teaching writing at HBCUs and discusses issues related to understanding,
appreciating, and teaching African American English and the African American rhetorical
tradition.

Because historically Black colleges and universities provided access to higher education
for African Americans during the 1800s and early 1900s when Blacks were not allowed to attend
white institutions, the primary goal of these institutions is to educate African American students.
These HBCUs are the sites of rhetorical education. Shirley Wilson Logan defines a site of
rhetorical education as “involving the act of communicating or receiving information through
writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Clearly the classrooms of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were important structured sites of such activities” (4). Many HBCUs were begun by religious and missionary groups, such as the American Missionary Association and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Gallien and Peterson 4). Then, the Morrill Act of 1862, which was also known as the Land Grant College Act, was passed to establish institutions that would provide education in agriculture and mechanics and industrial work. Because of segregation issues, the Second Morrill Act of 1890 was passed to ensure that funds were divided equally between the races. This act required that “states must either provide separate educational facilities for Blacks or admit them to existing colleges” (Hale xxv). As a result, most states chose to create separate schools for Blacks, especially in the South, rather than have Blacks attend the other universities.

All HBCUs did not initially have a liberal arts curriculum; most focused on industrial and vocational training. Booker T. Washington was a major figure behind the move toward industrial training as the goal for HBCUs. On the other hand, W.E.B. DuBois strongly disagreed with Washington and supported a liberal arts focus for HBCUs. DuBois and Washington differed on the roles of HBCUs, but Dr. Julius S. Scott, Jr. views HBCUs today as integral to preserving African American culture and history. Scott emphasized that “HBCUs have been the chief custodians, preservers, and enhancers of the Black heritage and experience” (Hale 7).

Open admission is also an advantage of HBCUs. HBCUs are able to admit African American students who may not have normally been accepted into higher education. Many students come to HBCUs with prior issues, such as a low-income family background and lower test scores. Also, these students are more likely to be first-generation college students or come from single-parent homes -- many are single parents, themselves. Despite these various issues,
they are able to succeed. Frank W. Hale, Jr. believes that total cultural immersion at HBCUs makes up for these issues. It is invaluable that students are surrounded by other students and faculty/staff that, in most cases, look like them, and evidence shows that those students are more willing to seek help if needed.

The mission statements of HBCUs should be connected to the pedagogy at HBCUs. Cynthia Neal Spence of Spelman College writes, “The most effective initiatives in higher education are those that can be traced to the mission and purpose of the institution. Seamless ties to the mission of an institution provide very clear blueprints for implementation of programmatic efforts” (Gallien and Peterson 65). Thus, the writing instruction should mirror the goals and founding principles of the institution so that the university and its curriculum coincide rather than contradict each other.

Marshalita Sims Peterson addresses the importance of a “culturally relevant pedagogy” and the communication and relationship between students and instructors reflecting the traditions of that student’s culture. A culturally relevant pedagogy is often associated with a critical pedagogy. Peterson explains, “Cultural mismatch theory suggests that when communication between the student and teacher is not culturally congruent, there can be adverse outcomes for students. This cultural mismatch or incongruence is a significant factor relating to academic achievement of African American students” (Gallien and Peterson 69). Angela Farris Watkins of Spelman College states, “I believe that the outstanding record of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in preparing African Americans students for excellence and achievement is attributable to an unprecedented skill for training African Americans to function simultaneously amid mainstream culture and African American culture” (Gallien and Peterson 122). In *The Souls of Black Folks*, W. E. B. DuBois documents the struggles of African
Americans to gain freedom and access to higher education; this text is well-known for his use of the term, double consciousness. Du Bois stated, “One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro” (2). HBCUs assist African American students in dealing with this “twoness”.

The Journey to Literacy for African Americans

Since literacy is tied to the act of writing, a study of writing instruction at historically Black colleges and universities requires a close look at the process of African American literacy. Research on the writing of African American first-year students at HBCUs must first address the African American journey to literacy. Historically, the process of African Americans acquiring literacy was arduous because in the Antebellum South slaves were denied by their masters the right to read and write; however, their passion for literacy remained steadfast. Slaves would often risk punishment just to learn how to read and write. For example, African Methodist Episcopal Bishop William Heard shared a vivid memory from when he was a 10-year-old slave in Elberton, Georgia. His account was: “We did not learn to read nor to write, as it was against the law for any person to teach any slave to read; and any slave caught writing suffered the penalty of having his forefinger cut from his right hand; yet there were some who could read and write” (qtd. in Cornelius 62). Doc Daniel Dowdy shared a similar story about being a slave. He stated, “‘The first time you was caught trying to read or write you was whipped with a cow-hide the next time with a cat-o-nine tails and the third time they cut the first jnt off'en your forefinger’” (qtd. in Cornelius 66). I believe that first-year writing students at HBCUs should be exposed to these powerful accounts from slaves in order to help students appreciate the struggle of their people to become literate.
Some texts that slaves used on their path to literacy included newspapers, the Bible, and Webster’s blue-back speller. Webster’s text helped slaves with spelling, reading, writing, and learning the alphabet. According to Phyllis Belt-Beyan, the speller “…required one’s first experiences with print to be the memorization of the sounds of letter chunks in lockstep order” (108). There are many documented accounts about slaves and former slaves owning and carrying around blue-back spellers. In his autobiography, Booker T. Washington writes about his strong desire to learn to read and that he asked his mother to locate a book to help him learn to read. He writes, “How or where she got it I do not know, but in some way she procured an old copy of Webster’s ‘blue-back’ spelling-book…” (Washington 29). Washington remembers this book as being “…the first one I ever had in my hands” (29). With the blue-back speller, Washington learned a great deal of the alphabet in a matter of weeks (29).

Slaves knew the punishments ranged from beatings to amputations to hangings; however, they still wanted to learn to read and write, because for many slaves, literacy was a form of freedom. Slave owners did not want their slaves to read and write because the owners felt literacy would cause revolt and rebellion if slaves learned to think for themselves. Janet Duitsman Cornelius writes:

The slaveowners were right. Africans who were enslaved quickly recognized the value of reading and writing—not only for their practical uses (from the beginning of slavery, slaves used reading and writing skills to run away) but because literacy, especially the ability to write, signified an establishment of the African’s human identity to the European world. (16)
The slave owners’ rationale for prohibiting slaves from learning to read reveals the sheer power of literacy. When slaves learned to read, they began to question the slave system and their rights. For slaves, the journey to literacy was risky but rewarding. HBCUs are the perfect sites for first-year writing students to grapple with such a rich history. These students could better understand that literacy allowed the slaves to enact change and question the injustices of society and how they can do the same on their campuses and in society.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes that, “The literature of the slave, published in English between 1760 and 1865, is the most obvious site to excavate the origins of the Afro-American literary tradition” (127). When enslaved Africans were brought to America, they were seen as objects to be bought and sold, rather than humans, so they had to find a way to be viewed as “speaking subjects” (Gates 129). Once viewed as “speaking subjects”, the slaves then had to write their voices (Gates 130). Blacks created a history of writing from the slave narratives to the rich literature of the Harlem Renaissance to the protest literature of the 1960s and 1970s. With the odds against Blacks, white slave owners set up experiments in which a few slaves, like Phyllis Wheatley, were educated alongside white children (Gates 129). The argument of illiteracy for Blacks was soon debunked. For example, Cornelius shares, “Beginning as early as 1661, individual slaves who had learned to write petitioned colonial courts for their liberty. Some used their writing skills to protest the entire slavery institution” (17). Another slave, John Warren, kept a copy of a cursive writing handbook that he had purchased for fifty cents from a white boy for three years and eventually learned to write from studying it closely. Warren wrote his own pass and ran to Canada for freedom (Cornelius 73). African slaves who were seen as inhuman, deficient, and incapable of higher thinking and skills were able to use literacy to
protest the system of slavery and write quite well in order deceive the slave owners and free themselves.

The trope of the Talking Book tracks the process of the literate black. According to Gates, the Trope of the Talking Book shows that:

the curious tension between the black vernacular and the literate white text, between the spoken and the written word, between the oral and the printed forms of literary discourse, has been represented and thematized in black letters at least since slaves and ex-slaves met the challenge of the Enlightenment to their humanity by literally writing themselves into being through carefully crafted representations in language of the black self.

(131)

Olaudah Equiano, James Gronniosaw, John Jea, Ottobah Cugoano, and John Marrant were some of the first African American authors to write about literacy. Each of their slave narratives has a passage recounting the author’s initial exposure to reading with a scene where the book seems to be actually talking and speaking to its readers, usually white masters; these slaves longed for the books to “talk” to them, too. Only after becoming literate, and after learning that the books did not actually talk, would slaves begin to fit into the Western culture. Years later, Fredrick Douglass and others, like Booker T. Washington and Ida B. Wells, would use literacy for political purposes, especially as letters and speeches to convince abolitionists, civil rights advocates, and non-abolitionists of the injustices of race inequality. Gates’ view also connects to Elizabeth McHenry and Shirley Brice Heath’s research that presents African Americans as both readers and writers. McHenry and Heath clarify the misleading claim that African Americans come solely from an oral culture. McHenry and Heath assert, “The history of reading and
writing and the role of literature in creating and sustaining self- and group images of being literate should set aside any inclination to view African Americans exclusively as ‘an oral people’” (Cushman et al. 273). Redd points out that African Americans’ participation in reading and writing clubs and publication in literary journals and magazines in the nineteenth-century “prove that African Americans have established not only a literate tradition but an essay tradition” (76). Composition students at HBCUs should be exposed to the texts of slaves and understand the African American journey to literacy, which will showcase how African Americans succeeded at the oral and the written—many times, combining the two in their texts.

African Americans wanted to learn to read for a variety of reasons, especially religious purposes such as reading the Bible and memorizing verses. Thus, many methods for achieving literacy were set in place. African Americans became literate through family and community traditions. They also learned through free-floating literacies, “plantation literacies, pulpit literacies, battlefield literacies, and political literacies” (Logan 11). Community literary societies began to appear in the early 1800s (Belt-Beyan 115). Also, as previously mentioned with McHenry and Heath’s research, many social and reading groups were formed to encourage reading and writing, as African Americans would gather in their homes and churches. Literacy was achieved with the help of religious and church institutions and fraternal lodges. During the 1950s in South Carolina, the Sea Island Citizenship Schools, founded by African Americans Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins, present another example of a community organizing for the purpose of improving literacy (Schneider 148). The Sea Island Citizenship Schools’ literacy focused on preparation for voter registration, the students’ personal objectives, and imparting political information to students in order to aid them in becoming better citizens (Schneider 159-160). Also, lending libraries, which consisted of the donations of reading and learning materials
in the neighborhood, were an important factor for community literacy (Belt-Beyan 118). These community literacy efforts provided support for African American adults. Belt-Beyan adds that, “Members attended weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meetings during which they took turns reading papers they had written. Some members wrote creative works while others wrote expository papers” (119). Poems were usually inspired by the works of Phyllis Wheatley (Belt-Beyan 119), which shows the importance of African American texts on African Americans’ writing. The emergence of literacy in African American communities also included the peer review process in some community groups. Belt-Beyan reports that “[W]ritten work was critiqued by fellow members and volunteer teachers from the African American community... [O]ne activity enjoyed by members of the Female Literary Society of Philadelphia was the random selection of a member’s composition to be read in front of peers” (Belt-Beyan 119). Members would then provide feedback for improvement. Another means for gaining literacy for African Americans was self-education, which took place in several forms – one example being the diaries women kept. African American women looked to diaries to express their feelings and record what was happening in their lives, especially with the ongoing race issues. These means of informal education later turned into formal education at HBCUs.

I believe that if first-year writing students at HBCUs had academic conversations about this difficult but beneficial journey to literacy for African Americans, students would be able to make some important connections among the history of their people, the importance of education for African Americans in general, and the meaningful impact of their institution - the HBCU. HBCU composition students can use this history to unpack the misconceptions that they come from primarily an oral culture. Most importantly, I believe that a strong understanding of the
African American journey to literacy will help HBCU first-year writing students value the linguistic and grammatical rhetorical features that are distinctly African American.

**African American English and the African American Rhetorical Tradition**

Many scholars have provided valuable research on African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition. Arnetha Ball conducted a study of the expository writing of African American adolescents and demonstrated that African American vernacular oral patterns carry over into their writing. In her research, she discovered that three patterns are most commonly used among African American student writers: circumlocution, narrative interspersion, and recursion. She defines circumlocution as writing “characterized by a series of implicitly associated topics with shifts that are lexically marked only by the use of *and*” (Ball 509). For those who do not understand African American language, such a pattern in written discourse will make the student appear to jump from one topic to another – a move in writing that certainly goes against the traditional classical rhetoric model. Narrative interspersion is a pattern that weaves narratives throughout the writing, and the recursion pattern is apparent when a writer introduces a topic and refers to it often with “different words or images” (Ball 511).

Ball reports that in another study (1991), “Teachers scored texts written in vernacular-based patterns (narrative interspersion and circumlocution) lower¹ than those written in academic-based patterns… (520). By learning more about African American language and its power, composition instructors, especially those as HBCUs, can better utilize the techniques of African American rhetoric and help their students question a society that attempts to mute African American.”

¹I take it that Ball’s use of “lower” means that student essays that used the vernacular-based patterns mentioned received lower grades – letter and number grades – than the essays that used academic-based patterns.
American student writers’ voices because their voices may be different from standards set by classical rhetoric.

Other key features of the African American rhetorical tradition are repetition, religious rhetoric, and African American English. Similar to the recursion pattern that Ball notes, repetition is frequently used in the African American rhetorical tradition to emphasize words and phrases, rhythms and sounds, and emotions. Good writing considers audience; thus, repetition is used to engage the audience. According to Lena Ampadu, “[R]epetition has a long-standing tradition in African American rhetorical practices, since its use is far more prevalent in societies in which prime importance is attached to the spoken word” (139). In Classical Greek rhetoric, repetition is mainly acceptable when it occurs at the sentence level, in the form of anaphora, antithesis, chiasmus, and parallelism.

Black pulpit oratory is another major component of the African American rhetorical tradition. Ampadu argues, “[S]everal researchers have concluded that students from an African American Vernacular English (AAVE) background write discourse that is influenced by the Black religious tradition” (143). Because the Black church is the center of the Black community, much of the oratorical practices that take place in the church, such as call-and-response, translate into writing, in which this type of writing is often identified as “too conversational” and not formal or academic. For example, pulpit rhetoric is often supported by audience participation, in which members of the congregation may join in adding: You right preacher, Gone ‘head, or Sho’ ‘Nuff. Secular forms of call and response may appear in students’ writing as well, especially as a form of “co-signing” or encouragement in which the writer/speaker invites the audience, using second person, which is often condemned in academic writing, to agree with the point being made (Williams 98). This use of religious rhetoric causes problems for students who
must write according to Euro-American standards because it is difficult for these students to transition into academia. In “Coming from the Heart: African American Students, Literacy Stories, and Rhetorical Education,” Elaine Richardson analyzes the rhetorical patterns in students’ writing, and finds that the most frequent uses of Black preacher rhetoric in students’ texts were “references to the Bible…sermonizing and/or moralizing…” (162). She reports that these features are usually characterized as “unsupported assumptions, disconnected ideas, unexplicated examples and truncated logic” (Richardson 162). Also, the African American church is open to members sharing a personal testimony, in which members tell stories about “how good God’s been” as a way to help validate the preacher’s sermon. Similarly, African American students are apt to include more personal experience, reflection, and testimony in their writing. However, some instructors may regard such an approach as too personal, conversational, and unsupported.

Valerie Balester argues that the African American Rhetorical Tradition, consisting of Black English Vernacular (BEV)\(^2\), poses problems for African American students. By conducting case studies of eight African American students’ written and oral discourse, Balester found that these students shift from BEV in speech to Standard American English (SAE) in writing, which causes their writing to appear informal. Balester advocates that instructors must adopt a new approach for reading African American students’ writing and re-think what constitutes standard, acceptable academic writing. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz conducted a study of African American adult female students to see how they would respond to a culturally relevant curriculum (CRC). Her research revealed three main trends emerged: “language validation, the fostering of positive self and group identity, and self-affirmation or affirmation of goals” (44). I

\(^2\) I have chosen to use the term African American English because of the negative connotation often associated with the word, *vernacular.*
will focus for a moment on language validation. The participants in Sealey-Ruiz’s study were “fluent speakers of AAVE” (53). When asked about their language, the students commented that they knew they “spoke incorrectly”, “didn’t know proper English”, and “can’t write good” (53). Many African American students have these negative thoughts about their speech and writing abilities, and composition instructors can play a vital role in helping students change these negative images of themselves into positives ones. For example, Sealey-Ruiz writes, “Initially, the majority of the students expressed confusion and amazement after reading articles that insisted on AAVE’s rich history and formal grammatical structure” (54). During a class discussion on Ebonics, Mylirah, one of Sealey-Ruiz’s students, argued, “It ain’t right to be speakin’ this way. If Blacks don’t learn to talk proper, even if they bin talkin’ this way from the start, it’s gonna hold them back. It ain’t gonna get them nowhere” (Sealey-Ruiz 53). Sealey-Ruiz comments that students soon started to voluntarily use AAE in their writing and to aid them in using Standard American English (54).

When African American students are not trained correctly to use features of African American rhetoric, African American student identity is affected. Along the same lines, Juanita Comfort shares the views that she and other African American graduate students have about scholarly discourse. Many times, they were faced with the dilemma of writing for a professor or maintaining their own voice as they developed as scholars. Comfort shares that Tanya, one of the female graduate students, divulged that becoming a scholar “had stripped away much of her much valued ‘Blackness’ (in terms of worldview rather than color)” (97). In this student’s eyes,

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3 Mylirah’s speech includes distinct features of African American English (i.e. use of habitual be, use of been for completed action, and dropping final consonant) as she makes her argument against Ebonics. As I conducted the student interviews during my case study, I witnessed what Sealey-Ruiz writes about: some of the student participants used AAE in their speech as they made their case against AAE in the first-year composition classroom.
she was no longer an African American female scholar but a “generic”4 scholar (98).

Understanding Tanya’s perspective, Comfort admits that she feels instructors have “neutralized” her color, as well. Although Tanya and Comfort’s sentiments are expressed as graduate students, many African American first-year writing students may share these same feelings. By understanding and appreciating the features of the African American rhetorical tradition, we can work against this issue of “racelessness” (Richardson 160).

As composition instructors and scholars continuously noticed African American student writers struggle with using African American English and Standard American English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (known as the 4Cs) had to act. The CCCC responded to heightened racial tensions that led to many political and social protests during the 1960s and 1970s, since it would ultimately affect the composition classroom. Geneva Smitherman writes that the crisis invoking this sense of urgency was caused by “the cultural-linguistic mismatch between higher education and the non-traditional (i.e., by virtue of color and class) students who were making their imprint upon the academic landscape for the first time in history” (385). The students who began entering college were not speaking Standard American English, but a systematic dialect, Black English or African American English. The “Students’ Right to their Own Language” resolution paved the way for respecting these language differences, of the past and present, as just that --- a difference not a deficit. These students and their language could no longer be ignored. J. L. Dillard writes that, “[I]n the 1960s, projects concerning the language of the ‘disadvantaged’ (often a euphemism for the Negro) began to receive large grants from the Office of Education, the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and other foundations” (265). In the 1960s, this language difference was attributed

4 Tanya later admits that maybe she is not a “generic” scholar, since she associates “generic” with meaning “white” (Comfort 98).
to “linguistic and cognitive deprivation” (Dillard 265). Warning of the problems that arise with this notion, William Labov asserts, “the myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous, because it diverts attention from real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child” (202). Dillard describes this variety of English as a pidgin language which was caused by “the mixing of speakers [slaves] of a large number of languages, with no one language predominant” (74). Thus, African American English began as African languages were brought to the United States with the slave trade. Slaves had to learn to use the English of the slave master in combination with the West African languages.

The SRTOL resolution had three main goals: to make others more aware of existing attitudes toward language, encourage linguistic diversity, present valid information about the varieties of language in order to help teach the new wave of students (really all students) to do well in the university and society (Smitherman 386). The reaction from scholars ranged from being supportive to non-supportive of the resolution; while some figured the SRTOL would hurt students and the language, others felt it would encourage diversity and level the academic playing field. The resolution passed in 1974, as follows:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language---dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its
heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (Conference on College Composition and Communication)

The SRTOL policy successfully argued for a feature of African American language that often appears in speech and writing, African American English. Still, over the years, much stigma has been attached to African American language because its speakers are immediately perceived as unintelligent. Yet, Geneva Smitherman, Marcyliena Morgan, Elaine Richardson and other scholars have established African American English as a systematic language that should not be discriminated against.

Using African American English in the writing classroom has been empowering but controversial at the same time. In the 1960s, during Black Panther activist Stokely Carmichael’s Speech Class at a Freedom School, his pedagogy consisted of helping students understand African American Vernacular English, as he “concerned himself with redefining AAVE as a tool for the oppressed in their struggle for emancipation” (Schneider 60). In the 1970s, the “Black English Case” was filed in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Parents believed their children were being considered as “learning disabled” because of their home discourse. Some Black parents disagreed with this pedagogy and filed King v. Ann Arbor, a federal court case; while linguists were fighting for the legitimacy of this language, parents were blaming the school system for inadequately educating their children. In recent years, much debate surfaced due to the Ebonics case in California. The Oakland School District’s students had consistently scored low in literacy, and administrators associated the low scores with the language that students were using at home and in the community, so they set out to introduce a bilingual language approach.
According to Smitherman, in 1996, “the Oakland, California School Board passed a resolution calling for the recognition of Ebonics as the primary language of Black students and for use of this language in teaching these students” (150). When Lisa Delpit was asked where she stood in the Ebonics debate, for or against it, she responded:

My answer must be neither. I can be neither for Ebonics or against Ebonics any more than I can be for or against air. It exists. It is the language spoken by many of our African-American children. It is the language they heard as their mothers nursed them and changed their diapers and played peek-a-boo with them. It is the language through which they first encountered love, nurturance and joy. (Delpit and Perry 17)

Many debated whether Ebonics should be recognized. Smitherman has written seminal works like Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America (1977) and Talkin that Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America using both Standard American English and African American English, which shows that students can be taught to effectively use African American English in academic writing. Yet, many scholars still question if the SRTOL has actually been fulfilled.

**Chapter Overview**

My dissertation addresses the mission of HBCUs and the way that mission is reflected in their first-year writing courses as well as their students’ writing. Also, this dissertation examines writing pedagogy at HBCUs, especially in terms of how first-year writing instructors and students address features of African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition in their writing assignments. Determining whether these mission statements at HBCUs
are just on record, or implemented in the curriculum by being evident in the first-year writing courses’ syllabi, textbooks, writing assignments, and readings will help composition instructors at HBCUs re-think the construction and role of the writing curriculum. My dissertation joins the conversation of Teresa Redd, Geneva Smitherman, and Arnetha Ball. Redd supports the inclusion of African American rhetoric in the writing curriculum at HBCUs and believes that instructors at HBCUs should teach students to weave African American English into Standard Written English. Along the same lines, Smitherman argues that African American students benefit from a teaching style based on the African American rhetorical tradition and strongly believes that students can use AAE and SAE successfully in written academic discourse. Ball’s research clearly shows that African American students prefer using African American rhetoric, yet many composition instructors consider its use in academia as error and thus grade essays that use it accordingly. As a result, many African American students are not being met half-way in the writing classroom and may feel as if their culture and voice are not being appreciated. I believe that writing pedagogy should encourage African American students to reflect their heritage—a heritage that is comprised of slavery, segregation, and a fight for literacy. If the African American experience is overlooked in the writing classroom, these students may feel as if their stories, their voices, and their style of writing are insignificant. I enter the conversation to focus on this population of students in a specific context—HBCUs. The dissertation continues the research began Teresa Redd, professor at Howard University. Redd writes about the conflicts faced when teaching composition at an HBCU. She addresses the importance of helping African American students understand that their ancestors not only had an oral tradition but an essay tradition as well and that using African American texts in the first-year composition classroom helps students to appreciate their language and culture. Redd also argues that African
American English can be used to help students successfully use Standard American English. I hope to build on this research because I believe that HBCUs should assist African American students in understanding the significance of African American English and African American rhetoric and their appropriate usage in academia. Composition instructors at HBCUs may choose to focus on correctness in an effort to send African American students out into the “real world” prepared for success in their career. However, Hill Taylor supports my view and makes a valid point about the high cost of sacrificing one’s identity. Taylor writes, “Asking HBCU students to practice an ‘economy of identity’ where they give up skills and ways of knowing in a supposed trade for employment or inclusion seems problematic and should be a major concern for all” (110).

In this dissertation, I study essays written by first-year writing students enrolled at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, and Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama. In these texts, I look for common trends, especially related to cultural issues, African American English (AAE), and the African American rhetorical tradition (AART).

In my research, I found that the students have an unclear understanding about AAE and stigmatize AAE in the classroom. I believe that these students’ lack of understanding of AAE contributes to negative perceptions of the language. The students did not portray much appreciation and respect for the language that is often spoken by African Americans. With this research, I argue that instructors should create a space for conversations about AAE since AAE is present in the students’ papers. Sharing with students some of the research that offers a basic definition and descriptions as well as some common features might heighten their awareness as
they begin to transition and engage the larger academic community. The classroom can be a place where those conversations begin.

I explore the following questions. What is the subject matter of first-year writing at HBCUs? What does the writing curriculum look like at HBCUs? Are the mission statements of HBCUs reflected in their first-year writing program? Is African American English present in first-year writing courses at HBCUs?

The next chapter will cover the methodological framework, focusing on the work of education professor, Gloria Ladson-Billings. Her theory coincides with the work of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, and bell hooks as they advance critical and liberatory pedagogies that emphasize the connections between cultural experiences and academic success.

In chapter three, I look at the mission statements and review the first-year writing syllabi from HBCUs, and then analyze the instances of a culturally relevant pedagogy. By interviewing students and instructors at Stillman College, Tougaloo College, and Tuskegee University and looking at syllabi, I present information gathered about the subject matter and the curriculum of writing programs at HBCUs.

This chapter will also uncover whether the mission statements are just on record or are actually being implemented in the curriculum. From looking at the curriculum as the three colleges and interviewing instructors and students, I explore how these HBCUs’ mission statements are evident in the first-year writing courses’ syllabi, textbooks, writing assignments, and readings.

This chapter will also cover how African American texts can be used in first-year writing courses as models to teach students to successfully utilize the African American rhetorical tradition and African American English in academia. By using Stillman, Tougaloo, and
Tuskegee as sites, I am able to see first-hand the texts that first-year students at these colleges use in the writing classroom.

Chapter four focuses on how first-year writing students and instructors handle African American English at HBCUs. Smitherman, Richardson, and other African American scholars have shown AAE to be a systematic language, yet it is still largely unaccepted. There is a constant battle between AAE and Standard American English; students and writing instructors are still resolving this language issue. This chapter shows how writing instructors at the three sites are dealing with this battle. Are they adopting a new approach for reading African American students’ writing and re-thinking what constitutes standard, acceptable academic writing? Or, is AAE viewed as “error” in student papers?

In the fifth chapter, I focus on discussing the conclusions and implications for composition instructors at HBCUs. I make connections to Ladson-Billings’ theory as I discuss how the three colleges enact cultural pedagogies. I also show how this research is relevant for students who are not African American, students who do not attend an HBCU, and for English instructors at non-HBCUs. I conclude by showing that HBCUs are integral to African American writing and oral practices and that HBCUs should not be pushed aside in the future when studying writing pedagogy and African American English.
Overview

This study aims to discover how each institution’s mission statement aligns with the first-year writing curriculum and how composition instructors and students address African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition at HBCUs. I conducted this study at three HBCUS in the South—Stillman, Tougaloo, and Tuskegee. I was particularly interested in working with Stillman College because it is the only four-year HBCU in Tuscaloosa and it is in close proximity to the University of Alabama. I also considered that my project would provide an excellent opportunity for collaboration between the English departments at the University of Alabama and Stillman College and that it will assist in continuously building a partnership between the two institutions, now and in the future. I was drawn to Tougaloo College because my undergraduate experiences there ultimately ignited the spark that led to conducting this study years later. Immediately after my presentation at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Atlanta, Georgia, an English professor from Tuskegee University chatted with me about my research on HBCUs and we both thought Tuskegee would be a good site for research, given its rich history ranging from George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington to the Tuskegee Airmen.
• Stillman College, founded in 1876, is a private HBCU located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. According to the college’s website, approximately 1,000 undergraduate students are enrolled at Stillman.

• Founded in 1869, Tougaloo College is a private HBCU in Tougaloo, Mississippi, which is located on the outskirts of Jackson, MS. Roughly 940 students are enrolled at Tougaloo.

• Founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881, Tuskegee University is an independent institution located in Tuskegee, Alabama and enrolls 2,994 students, according to the university’s website.

Using rhetorical analysis and in-depth interviews, I set out to determine the first-year writing curriculum of HBCUs and whether the curriculum corresponds to the mission statements and goals of HBCUs. This qualitative study is grounded in Ladson-Billings’ theoretical framework that focuses on a culturally relevant pedagogy, as well as the work of Shor, Freire, Giroux, and hooks. The design of the study consists of the following:

• Analyzing the syllabi collected from the first-year writing courses being studied at Stillman College, Tougaloo College, and Tuskegee University and making connections to the institutions’ mission statements

• Analyzing, using Ladson-Billings’ theory, the student essays collected from the three research sites

• Interviewing the students who have written the essays collected for the study

• Interviewing the writing instructors of the students whose essays have been collected for the study
• Analyzing and discussing the responses received from the interviews with instructors and students

Participants

The population for this study consisted of African American students (both male and female) who are currently enrolled in a first-year writing course at Stillman College, Tougaloo College, or Tuskegee University during the Spring 2012 semester. Six instructors who teach first-year writing at the three institutions were recruited via email. The recruitment email and the attachment to the recruitment email to instructors are included in the appendix.

Instructor participants were of various ages, of either gender, and of any ethnic background. The student sample comes from African American students enrolled in one first-year writing course at each of the three institutions. I randomly chose two students from each course using a list randomizer, which yielded a total of six students for the sample. The student’s name listed beside the number 1 and the number 2 were chosen to participate in the study. If the student who was randomly chosen later decided to withdraw from the study, I would then return to the aforementioned print-out and go forth with the student who was listed beside the number 3 as the new participant, and so on down the list, if needed. (Student participants withdrew at two sites, Stillman and Tougaloo, and had to be replaced.) The randomization procedure was completed a total of three times – once for each course section.

First-year writing students may be a variety of ages, so the participants may range in age from 17 and up. Occasionally, there may be a student enrolled in a first-year writing course who may not be classified as a freshman. My rationale for working with six students and three instructors was that the sample size would be appropriate for a dissertation-length study that
required analyzing essays, conducting interviews, transcribing and analyzing interview excerpts, and discussing the findings. This sample size was also appropriate for the time frame, especially to present an adequate view of African American composition students at today’s HBCUs. I acknowledge that this is a pilot study and that there is certainly room for expanding this research.

**Data Collection**

Data for this study were collected during the Spring 2012 semester. First-year writing instructors at the three research sites were invited to participate using a recruitment email. Once three instructors, one from each institution, had expressed interest in participating in the study, I visited the classes 1-3 days after the first major essay had been written to provide background on the study and distribute participant information sheets to the first-year writing students who were enrolled in these instructors’ courses at Stillman College, Tougaloo College, and Tuskegee University and to the instructors. I chose to approach the students and visit the classrooms after the first essay was written, in an effort not to influence the type and content of the essay that the students would write. Before the study began, I provided all participants with an information participation sheet and reviewed it with them. The students and instructors received separate information sheets. At this initial visit, I briefed the students and instructors on the study, reviewed the forms, answered questions, and collected the forms from those who were ready to submit the form. Because the participants either had to check the box by “I agree to participate” or the box by “I do not agree to participate”, students were not coerced or singled-out. Thus, every student could submit a sheet regardless of whether he or she was agreeing to participate or not. Also, participants could hand in the sheet to me at the end of the class period. At this initial visit, I also received a copy of the course syllabi and calendar from the participating instructors.
at the three research sites and retrieved a copy of the institution’s mission statement from the colleges’ websites. In an effort to give participants additional time after the initial class visit to review and understand the study and the participant information sheet, I returned to each institution exactly one week after the initial visit to answer any questions about the study and to collect any remaining participation information sheets. After I randomly selected two students from each course, yielding a total of six students, the students selected to participate were emailed to inform them that they were selected for the study⁵. Shortly thereafter, the six student participants submitted a copy of their first major essay to me as an attachment via email no more than ten days after the assignment’s due date.

I conducted a rhetorical analysis which consisted of a critical or close reading of all the texts and data collected: course syllabi, writing prompts, student essays, institution mission statements, and transcripts of the interviews. The rhetorical analysis entailed analyzing the essays, using Ladson-Billings’ theoretical framework, making connections in the 7 students’ essays to the corresponding student’s institution’s mission statement and interview responses, and reading closely for examples of African American English and African American rhetoric in the essays⁶. Jack Selzer defines rhetorical analysis as “an effort to read interpretively, with an eye toward understanding a message fully and how that message is crafted to earn a particular response” (282). A rhetorical analysis also involves understanding the rhetorical situation, “the circumstances of subject, audience, occasion, and purpose” (Selzer 282). The analysis for this study required that I read and re-read the texts and listen and re-listen to the audio of the

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⁵ The email to the students who were randomly selected to participate in the study is included in the appendix.
⁶ A student at Stillman College withdrew halfway through the study after he had submitted his essay. Thus, I was able to analyze a total of 7 students’ essays.
interviews several times in order to take notes in the margins and uncover the major themes, as well as their meanings and relationships.

Using a digital recorder to record the interviews, I conducted face-to-face, one-on-one 15-20 minute interviews with each of the nine participants (six student participants and three instructor participants). As an incentive, the nine participants each received a $25 Visa gift card for participating in the study. During the individual student interviews, student participants were asked about the paper they submitted and their knowledge of African American English and its use in speech and writing. During the individual instructor interviews, instructors were asked about their views on teaching writing at an HBCU and on teaching, grading, and respecting African American English. Two different interview protocols were used to conduct the interviews, one for students and one for instructors. I transcribed the responses, and participants were re-contacted via email if clarity was needed. At the interviews, the discussion often turned conversational and relaxed, which allowed openness and a willingness to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences. All participants were given pseudonyms so their identity would be confidential throughout the study.

**Researcher Positionality**

The link between the researcher and her qualitative study is important. Researcher positionality should be addressed because “How a researcher positions him or herself within a research study is critical to understanding the lens used to interpret the data” (Jones, Torres, and Arminio 104). As the primary researcher, I identify as an African American female. I conducted

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7 The interview protocols are included in the appendix.
the participant interviews and analyzed the data. I attended an HBCU, Tougaloo College, for undergraduate study. I later pursued graduate study at two predominantly white universities.

I believe my academic career affords a critical and unique perspective from which to approach this study and analyze the data. Because I have had the HBCU experience, I believe my background assisted me as a researcher at the research sites, especially in understanding the context, gaining access to the community, and establishing a rapport with the participants. I view myself as a part of the community and as truly passionate and connected to the research. On the other hand, I hope my HBCU experience has not created too much of a bias as I analyzed the data. Despite that possibility, my aim is that the data will speak for itself and outweigh any type of bias, as I have tried to present information and interpret data adequately, with truth and credibility prevailing. I hope my background and HBCU affiliation will help eliminate any thoughts that I am simply entering the community to conduct research and leave, with no real stake in the issue. That is not the case.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, I focus primarily on the work of Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay who have extensively researched culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings is a professor of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Gay is a professor in Curriculum and Instruction/College of Education at the University of Washington. Their work also coincides with the theories of Freire, Giroux, and Shor, as they advance critical and liberatory pedagogies. With the aim to determine the pedagogy and curriculum at HBCUs, and specifically at Stillman College, Tougaloo College, and Tuskegee University, I believe Ladson-Billings and Gay’s ideologies that maintain that African American
students are more likely to achieve academically when there is a clear, substantial, and consistent link between the students’ home life and culture and the classroom will prove quite useful as a theoretical framework for this project. I believe that HBCUs, where African Americans students are the dominant culture, would be excellent research sites to enact this pedagogy because these institutions were founded to educate a specific culture of people seeking post-secondary education. African American students at HBCUs should not feel the demands to conform as they might feel at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). With a culturally relevant pedagogy, writing instructors should be able to make connections among the students’ ideas, writing, culture, and home life. Thus, HBCU students should feel encouraged to embrace their culture more instead of trying to simply fit in, and, as a result of that, have their writing and identity suffer. At an HBCU, where there is a rich history and cultural legacy, I believe that a culturally relevant pedagogy is an excellent approach to obtaining academic success. Now, I look at the components of this framework in more detail.

**Defining a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

I will provide, in order to better understand this approach to teaching, a definition and other common names for this pedagogy. Ladson-Billings defines culturally relevant teaching as “a pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (160). It has three criteria: “(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings 160). These criteria are further explained below.
• Academic success calls for students to develop the necessary skills to participate in a
democratic society; these include “literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political
skills” (Ladson-Billings 160). According to Ladson-Billings, instructors must demand,
and expect nothing less, than academic excellence from their students.

• At the basis of cultural competence is the notion that it is not beneficial for students to
improve themselves academically while neglecting the very substance that makes them
individuals when they enter the university. Ladson-Billings writes, “Culturally relevant
teaching requires that students maintain some cultural integrity as well as academic
excellence” (160). Academic institutions, especially HBCUs, should be a place where
students feel like they can be themselves, without hesitation and without regret.

• Critical Consciousness consists of students questioning and challenging what others
simply accept as final. Critically conscious students, when faced with injustice and
unfairness, should not think “Well, there’s nothing I can do about that.” Ladson-Billings
believes, “…students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows
them to critique the cultural norms, vales, mores, and institutions that produce and
maintain social inequities” (162). Critically conscious students are prepared to become
active and productive citizens.

Ladson-Billings mentions that not every instructor will approach these three criteria in the same
manner. From observing the teachers in her study, she noticed that some teachers were more
“structured or rigid” while others seemed to take a more “progressive” teaching approach
(Ladson-Billings 478). I appreciate that with this pedagogy, instructors can be flexible with their
teaching strategies and in order to best meet the needs of their students. Thus, no two culturally
relevant instructors’ strategies will look exactly alike. However, Ladson-Billings identified three
commonalities among culturally relevant instructors that allow them to meet the criteria of a culturally relevant pedagogy: conceptions of self and others, the way social relations are structured, and the conceptions of knowledge (Ladson-Billings 478). These instructors value their profession of teaching and believe that all students can achieve academic success. These instructors connect with all of their students and promote collaborative learning. Lastly, these instructors understand that knowledge is not static—knowledge is constructed (Ladson-Billings 478-481). Culturally relevant pedagogy also goes by other names, mainly, culturally responsive, culturally congruent, culturally compatible, and culturally appropriate (Gay 29, Ladson-Billings 466).

Also, this culturally relevant pedagogy encourages critical thinking and liberatory education that has been set forth by Shor, Giroux, Freire, and hooks. Shor writes in *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* that education should compel students “to act as citizens who question knowledge and society” (qtd. in Pough 475). Shor uses a critical pedagogy in his courses in order to eliminate the teacher-centered classroom. As a result, students and teachers create knowledge together using their experiences, and students challenge power systems in their communities. Giroux explains that “The politics of critical pedagogy are radical but not doctrinaire. That is, critical pedagogy self-consciously operates from a perspective in which teaching and learning are committed to expanding rather than restricting the opportunities for students and others to be social, political, and economic agents” (169). A critical pedagogy aims to re-situate the traditional student-teacher relationship, which allows students to think about their role in society. When students become engaged citizens, they are not forced into what Freire describes as the “banking model” of education. In this model, the teacher holds all knowledge and makes deposits into the students’ brains. Freire writes that, for
students, the banking model lacks transforming power, in that the “contents [of narration] are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that endangered them and could give them significance” (71). Instead, Freire encourages a problem-posing education in which students “perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves” (83). A critical pedagogy works toward the larger significance of education, beyond the classroom walls, and asks students to “critically consider reality” (74). Along the same lines, hooks promotes what she has termed “engaged pedagogy” that sees education as a practice of freedom. hooks writes that “Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance” (21). hooks wants each student to be an “active participant, not a passive consumer” (14). This type of pedagogy makes room for the diversification of education and ideas. Ladson-Billings and Gay encourage these same types of ideals with a culturally relevant curriculum.

A culturally relevant pedagogy is connected to a cultural studies pedagogy, and there has been much conversation and an ongoing debate about the cultural studies approach to teaching writing. Diana George and John Trimbur posit that the emphasis on cultural studies, particularly the focus on multiculturalism, politics, and race studies, in the field of composition and rhetoric began in the 1960s and 1970s (Tate 80). With open admissions and a new demographic of students attending college, writing instructors explored new strategies to reach these students by incorporating issues and topics that might appeal to this new, diverse population of students. The cultural studies pedagogy allowed writing instructors to: “(1) to begin student writing with a topic ‘close to self,’ close to the students’ experiences, and (2) to teach close reading and
interpretation of texts, in this case, substituting popular culture or media for literary texts” (Tate 82). However, Gary Tate believes that “the desire to find a ‘content’ for composition can all too easily lead to the neglect of writing” (85). Tate noted that having students focus on popular topics and current events would shift the attention from the purpose of a composition class—students’ actual writing and writing instruction. In “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing,” Maxine Hairston, a former chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), expressed her objections to the cultural studies approach. She felt that “students’ own writing must be the center of the course” and that writing instructors “should stay within our area of professional expertise” (186). Hairston argued that writing instructors are simply using the writing classroom to advance their own political views and to indoctrinate students, who, in her eyes, are young, confused, and easily influenced. Despite the contrary views about infusing culture into the first-year writing course, I argue that the cultural studies approach, and thus a culturally relevant pedagogy, still allows instructors and students to focus on writing, just with topics and texts, whether traditional or contemporary, that students can actually relate to and write about with passion and enthusiasm. Writing instructors can certainly integrate cultural studies into the writing curriculum in a way that is not aggressive, forced, or intimidating to students.

Ladson-Billings’ theoretical framework proved beneficial as I analyzed the mission statements, syllabi, student essays, and responses from interviews. I was able to make key connections between writing instruction at HBCUs and Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant pedagogy theory. I believe that the writing instruction at historically Black colleges and universities should reflect African American students’ voices, experiences, and heritage.
The Importance of a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for African American Students

African Americans have a rich heritage and special experiences and unique traditions. However, African Americans are often bombarded with the negative stereotypes and images of their race and communities. I can personally attest to regularly hearing African American neighborhoods being described as the “ghetto”, African American hair being characterized as “nappy” and African American speech being labeled as “uneducated”. Unfortunately, these negative images and many others impact African Americans’ everyday lives -- in the classroom and on the job. A culturally relevant pedagogy helps African American students grapple with the images of their race – both positive and negative. The writing classroom is an excellent space to address these issues.

Data Analysis

For this study, I constantly compared the data, which included carefully reviewing the essays, syllabi, essay prompts, mission statements, and the interview transcripts. The constant comparative qualitative method is recommended by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998) and Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse (1994) who focus on grounded theory in qualitative research. Susan Jones, Vasti Torres, and Jan Arminio state that the constant comparative analysis method requires the researcher to simultaneously collect and analyze data at “all stages of the data collection and interpretation process, and results in the identification of codes” (44). As I collected the various documents, I made note of initial keywords, and variations of those keywords, and themes in the margins of the documents. Also, as recommended by Strauss & Corbin, I used open coding, which consists of approaching data analysis line-by-line to recognize themes that emerge from the data. This strategy allows the focus to remain on the participants
and the data. With open coding, “Each word, phrase, or sentence is categorized and coded as a concept” (Jones, Torres, and Arminio 44). The concepts were then grouped into categories and the categories were given names. The categories that had the least items or keywords underneath it were eliminated and the categories that had the most items or keywords underneath were designated as major themes. This approach, which Strauss and Corbin label as the “fracturing of the data,” allowed the data to be broken down into manageable sections (97). To further assist with the organization and coding of the data, I created a color-coding system. The color-coding system was an efficient method to recognize redundancy, the recurring patterns among the data, and the relationships among the themes from the data. Strauss and Corbin advise that their readers be flexible and that one data set can have many interpretations. Once the codes were identified, I then focused on the discussion around those themes. As I discuss the findings of this study in later chapters, I provide actual passages from the students’ essays and excerpts from the nine participants’ interviews in an effort to present accurate representations of the participants, as well as to sustain my credibility and trustworthiness. Of course, I advance my interpretation of the data from this study, but readers can very easily draw their own conclusions from the data.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study has two limitations. I originally planned for the participants to consist of two instructors from each of the three institutions in order to have a total of 6 instructors rather than 3. Going forward with this initial plan, I began perusing the three institutions’ English department websites to view the lists of English faculty and their teaching assignments, as well as the course offerings, to identify those instructors who were associated with first-year writing. I was soon reminded that only two or three instructors are usually responsible for teaching the
sections of first-year writing at these small, liberal arts colleges, which is quite different from larger institutions where 100 or more instructors take on this task. As a result, my sampling and pool of possible participants were limited by default. Nonetheless, I sent the recruitment email to 2 or 3 instructors at each institution who were currently teaching first-year writing courses. As expected with any study, there was some lack of response, which may have been due to different factors. After the instructors’ “opt-in” phase, I was grateful to have one instructor from each institution to respond to the email and express interest in participating in the study. In the end, I was no longer able to have six students from six sections of a first-year writing course, and instead I had six students from three sections—two students from each section.

Also, I had originally hoped to work primarily with the first course of the first-year writing sequence, which is equivalent to what many know as English 101, in order to work with the students in their very first semester of college, while they were possibly having their very first experience and introduction to a college-level writing class. However, because I began this study in the Spring semester of the academic year, most of the institutions’ English departments’ first-year writing focus had shifted to the second course, which is usually equivalent to what many of us recognize as English 102, of the two-course first-year writing sequence. In addition to that, I had to work with whatever first-year writing course that was being taught at the time by the instructors who had expressed interest in the study, whether it was the equivalent of English 101 or English 102. Ultimately, I had the opportunity to work with the equivalent of one English 101 and two English 102 type courses, and I was still able to work with student participants during their freshman-level experience with college writing. The courses and their specific course number and description will be explained further in a later chapter.
Mission Statements

I will focus now on exploring the structure of the first-year writing courses at the three HBCUs, especially in terms of the connection to each institution’s respective mission statement. A mission statement provides the purpose, vision, and goals for the university, as well as the principles on which the university was founded. A mission statement gives the university’s reasons for existence and should directly influence the actions of the university. In general, mission statements usually cover the institutions' aims, target audience, services, values, distinguishing characteristics, and desirable achievements. Because these core components should be clearly outlined in an institution’s mission statement, I believe that a mission statement can be used to assess its day-to-day operations. I argue that there should be a direct correlation between a university’s mission statement and its curriculum and instruction. Thus, I reviewed the mission statements of the three sites, Stillman College, Tougaloo College, and Tuskegee University, to first identify common themes among the three documents. Henry Ponder, appointed as the eighteenth president of Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama, writes, “The printed mission statements of HBCUs may differ in phraseology, but all have common themes: (1) fostering leadership; (2) education of the whole person; (3) communication—oral and written; (4) value of liberal education; (5) knowledge and appreciation of different cultures; (6)
service to community; and (7) moral and spiritual values” (120). In general, this proved to be correct.

Specifically, the three mission statements express similar interests and goals for the universities and for their students. The three all address academic excellence, leadership, community service, integrity, diversity/equality, along with a nurturing environment, liberal arts focus, and preparation for a career after graduation. Other key themes that surfaced among the three institutions’ mission statements include: an emphasis on teaching, service, and research (at Tuskegee University and Tougaloo College), life-long learning (at Tuskegee University and Tougaloo College), a global society (at Tuskegee University and Tougaloo College), and utilizing technologies (at Stillman College and Tougaloo College).

**Stillman College**

Stillman’s mission statement made clear that its goal is to provide “high quality educational opportunities for diverse populations with disparate levels of academic preparation” (“Mission”). With this declaration, Stillman shows that it understands its students are unique personally and academically and accepts that each student has different life experiences and academic abilities. This opening statement of Stillman’s mission statements speaks to an important concept in instruction, the notion of “meeting students where they are” in order to truly achieve academic success. After all, students arrive at Stillman College from various high schools and with varying socioeconomic status and levels of achievement. Stillman acknowledges the fact that different types of students, with different academic backgrounds, will enroll at Stillman. Stillman College, in fact, seems to anticipate, embrace, and welcome this difference among students.
Stillman’s mission statement also makes a claim about producing Stillman graduates who can express themselves clearly in “written and spoken forms” (“Mission”) which shows that a certain standard of communication is expected from Stillman College students. I find it quite refreshing that the college focuses on the importance of writing, not only during matriculation, but after graduation, as well. Many students, especially non-English majors, feel that taking a writing class is unnecessary because they will never use those skills in real life or be expected to write a paper ever again once at their job.

Also, the college’s mission states that it wants to produce graduates who will “[q]ualify for admission to and success in graduate and professional schools or for entry into selected careers” (“Mission”). This specific aim attends to what many view as the practical purpose for attending college and getting a higher education – to get a job and to be successful. Ultimately, Stillman College wants to provide its students with a sound education that will prepare them for a career.

Tuskegee University

Tuskegee University’s mission statement is the only statement of the three that makes a very powerful statement about its target audience: African American students. It reads, “The University is rooted in a history of successfully educating African Americans to understand themselves and their society against the background of their total cultural heritage and the promise of their individual and collective future” (“University Mission”). This statement speaks volumes. First, as previously mentioned, it is the only statement to actually mention that the university’s demographic is African American students that they educate. Along with that, the university wants to help this specific group of students to learn more about and appreciate
themselves. This is to be accomplished through recognizing their culture’s history and heritage, with their eyes on a successful future as an individual and also as a group, the entire race of people. Indeed, the connection between the students’ past and future is quite clear. Furthermore, one of the specific aims of the undergraduate program is to “[d]eepen students’ knowledge of history and the cultural heritage” (“University Mission”). Tuskegee’s mission statement makes African American students and their culture a priority.

The university’s mission statement also addresses the significance of preparation for its students’ employment and career. It looks at grooming students for the “work force of the 21st century and beyond” (“University Mission”). The instruction section of the mission statement mentions providing a quality education with “a career orientation” and the “relationship between education and employment, between what students learn and the changing needs of the global workforce” (“University Mission”). I admire that the university references the idea of how the workforce and the job market changes. Some jobs and careers that are available now were unimaginable ten years ago. Yet, Tuskegee concentrates on providing the knowledge and skills that will help students excel as the world changes and to excel in jobs that will be created beyond the 21st century. Equally important to mention is the aim of preparing students for a competitive edge in a global workforce. Tuskegee University’s instruction is attentive to preparing students for the world of work after college, which again is very practical and realistic.

Another aim of the college’s undergraduate program is to “[i]nsure that students have a strong grasp of language use--written and oral, mathematical as well as literary” (“University Mission”). Similarly to Stillman, Tuskegee also makes a statement about the importance of language as far as possessing sound writing and speaking skills. The university values its students having good communication skills. Tuskegee takes this view on communication a step
further by addressing language use from a literary perspective, which helps to mold a well-rounded student.

**Tougaloo College**

Tougaloo College is the only mission statement of the three to point out that it is a historically Black institution. Notably, over the course of Tougaloo’s vision/mission statement, life-long learning is mentioned three times in the short statement. It is evident that the college centers on the fact that learning does not stop after the student leaves the classroom or graduates from the college. At the heart of the mission statement, Tougaloo emphasizes that learning is a continuous, never-ending process. Lifelong learning also encompasses the type of education that prepares students to quickly and successfully adapt to new ideas, information, technologies, and changes in the world for years to come.

Tougaloo College’s mission statement also highly regards service to mankind, as the mission uses the terms social commitment and servant-leaders. I was especially drawn to the term servant-leaders. Servant-leader, coined by Robert K. Greenleaf, is one who focuses his or her time on fulfilling the needs of others. Greenleaf wrote in his essay *The Servant as Leader* that “The servant-leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first…” (7). The mission statement reads: “Tougaloo College intends to contribute to the social, health, and educational needs of the local and state communities through a program of community service” (“About Tougaloo College”). Gallien and Peterson write, “Anne Colby [author of *Education Citizens*] suggests that those institutions placing a high emphasis on service to the community produce students who have a heightened sense of moral
and civic responsibility that they transfer into the world after graduation” (186). Having attended Tougaloo College, I can attest to the importance the college placed on community service. Sixty documented community service hours is required for graduation. Students eligible for graduation had to complete a community service packet with relevant documents, such as letters, time sheet, and an essay about the community service experience. I distinctly remember my community service experience while at Tougaloo, as well as submitting my reflective essay entitled *What It Means to Serve*.

**Syllabi**

The syllabus is the guiding document for a course and allows instructors to make their standards, course requirements, policies, and expectations quite clear. A syllabus should be frequently consulted by the students to make certain that they are meeting the requirements and deadlines and following the guidelines prescribed to them by their instructors. Syllabi are especially beneficial for freshman students who are new to college and need an outline and guidance as they transition into college. Instructors often urge students to check the syllabus first whenever they have questions or concerns about the course; if an answer cannot be found, then students should consult with the instructors. So, a syllabus is a contract between students and instructors.

I reviewed the first-year writing syllabi from the three institutions to garner a sense of the content of the first-year writing course and to examine the statements made about language
expectations for the course. In addition, I wanted to look at how the syllabi tied in with the institutions’ mission statements discussed above\(^9\).

**Stillman College**

I first looked at the syllabus for Dr. John Tanner\(^{10}\)’s Spring 2012 ENG 132 course – English Composition II. This was Dr. Tanner’s ninth year teaching college English. ENG 132 at Stillman College focuses on writing a research paper and analyzing pieces of literature. Simply put, Dr. Tanner’s English 132 courses focuses on argument, analysis, and research and also analyzing poems, short fiction stories, and essays. The three units covered during the semester consist of fictional experience, poetic experience, and MLA/research/argumentation. The texts for the course include *Exploring Literature: Writing and Arguing about Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay 4th ed.* by Frank Madden and *The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook brief 4th ed.* by Cheryl Glenn and Loretta Gray. During my interview with Dr. Tanner, he said, “So, predominantly, we’re assigning poetry and fiction. We’re not really focusing on the essays. In the first Comp, the focus is writing essays, and there is not a shared text for that course.” He went on to add, “[S]o then that whole carry out from 1\(^{st}\) Comp to 2\(^{nd}\) Comp is not as direct”, as he discusses the department’s transition from English 131 to English 132 (Tanner). During the interview, Tanner said, “For the most part we are focusing on four modes of discourse, which is comparison and contrast, classification, cause and effect, and argumentation.” As expected, this particular course, the second course of the two-course sequence for first-year writing, aims to reinforce and expand on what was learned in the first course, ENG 131--English Composition I.

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\(^9\) The syllabi are included in the appendix.

\(^{10}\) All participants’ names are pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality.
I also look into how the instructor addressed language use for his course. His syllabus states under the course objectives section that students should “choose words, grammatical constructions, and writing conventions according to Standard English usage and/or appropriate to the purpose of the composition” (Tanner 1). The statement hints that aside from the cases of appropriate exceptions, formal, Standard English is expected from students. However, Dr. Tanner allows students some flexibility to make their own decisions about language choice and to use the language or discourse as they see fit for a particular assignment or genre. I found it interesting that Dr. Tanner allowed students the room to decide when it is appropriate to do so based on the composition and wanted to ask him more about this. Dr. Tanner stated that journal entries and blogs are where students have more leeway with language use. He said, “So, in there [journal entries and/or blogs] I'm not as rigorous in terms of what it is they produce, and I think that allows them a sense of relief” (Tanner). The sense of relief he speaks of indicates students’ feeling happy about this sense of freedom to temporarily escape the four walls of formal, Standard English. Dr. Tanner requires his students to complete reader-response journal entries in order “to help reflect on the relevance of and/or personal connections students may have…” with the texts (Tanner 1). This writing activity allows the students to share their personal experiences in order to be able to relate to the literature they read for the course.

As previously mentioned, there is a focus on literature in this course. Dr. Tanner states, “The reason for having them [students] write about literature is because they have to make a transition, and this course is that transition. They have to take a literature course after they get done with their Comp requirement.” Dr. Tanner, the only Composition and Rhetoric faculty in the department, expressed that he appreciates literature and its ability to teach life-lessons and that it provides great examples of details and description. He also mentions that many students
question it at first, but after time, they appreciate it and understand it. To get the actual students’ perspectives, I interviewed two of Dr. Tanner’s students, Malcolm King and Kelly Johnson, who are enrolled in his ENG 132 course. Malcolm said that he does like writing about literature because “you’re learning about African American heritage, different cultures, and ethnicities, and it’s like English is kind of broadening our horizons through writing” (King). On the other hand, Kelly stated, “Literature is okay, but I wouldn’t prefer it. I’d rather write about something that’s related to me more, like, well not related to me but in the community, like abuse or abortion. I can like elaborate on that than versus the literature, poems, and all that” (Johnson).

So, there was a mixed reaction about the use of literature in ENG 132 at Stillman. While one student appreciated learning about his heritage and other cultures through literature, another student seemed to want to write about more practical, everyday topics that she knew more about and could write about more extensively. While Malcolm’s first essay went a little beyond four pages, Kelly’s first essay for the course fell short of the three-page requirement that was specified on the assignment sheet and could be considered repetitive. As she mentioned, the short length of the essay could be due to her feeling that she was unable to elaborate on that particular topic, which was the comparison of two stories from the textbook. Additionally, Tanner admires how literary pieces can provide words that students can learn from. He gives this example: “It’s one thing to say oh Suzie was depressed versus Suzie felt as if the clouds were gonna come down low and sweep her away” (Tanner). He encourages his students to use literature to help them provide details and description in their own writing similar to what he pointed out in his own example.
Tuskegee University

Next, I analyzed the syllabus for Dr. Jane Winston’s Spring 2012 English 102 course at Tuskegee. She began teaching college English in 1993 as a teaching assistant. Her syllabus states that “[t]he purpose of the course is for students to become proficient in the academic writing…” and also citation and research techniques (Winston). The syllabus lists the textbooks for the course as: *Backpack Literature 4th Edition* by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Goioa and *The LB Brief Handbook*. Dr. Winston stated, “We all use the same textbook for second semester composition, so it’s not a choice that I make.” Also, Dr. Winston’s syllabus addresses language use for the course with the following statement: “Students are expected to write and think at a higher level of sophistication and have command of better Standard English grammar and punctuation than was expected of them in English 101” (Winston). So, the expectation is that the use of Standard English should have improved significantly since taking English 101. Also, I noted that “[t]he final exam for this course will cover grammar, punctuation, and diction problems that have occurred frequently in student papers during the semester” (Winston). Improving grammar is central to this course.

Similar to Dr. Tanner’s course, Dr. Winston’s English 102 course at Tuskegee University focuses on literature. Her syllabus reads: “Topics will focus on works of literature in the genres of poetry, fiction, and drama” (Winston). In English 101, the students write papers in which they write about their own experiences. Dr. Winston said, “They don’t have to do research for those. I always assign a personal experience paper. And, then I have them maybe evaluate something or compare some things because they’re always familiar with that.” Dr. Winston shared that in English 102, “It’s the policy of the department that we teach writing through literature.” To get the students’ opinions on writing about literature, I interviewed a freshman student, Shayla
Steele, and a non-traditional student, Kendrick Minor, who has been in the military and travelled to many different countries. Shayla said, “I don’t like writing about the stories in this class. I would rather write about personal experiences…” (Steele). While Kendrick said, “I like the fact that she does mix it up, between poems, plays, and everything. It makes you have to think. It’s a different thought process between writing a paper from a poem or a short story or a play” (Minor). Once again, students had a mixed reaction to having literature be the content of the course and their written assignments. I must point out that Shayla’s first paper, like Kelly’s from Stillman, fell short of the 900 word count requirement stated in Dr. Winston’s assignment sheet for the first paper. Shayla’s first essay was short, with 525 words. On the other hand, Kendrick’s essay exceeded the word count with 1,017 words. I cannot help but return to Kelly’s point about her belief that writing about something other than literature would help her to elaborate more in her essays. Both Kelly and Shayla expressed disliking writing about literature and both of their essays did not meet the length or word count requirements for the first essay.

Tougaloo College

Finally, I reviewed the syllabus for Dr. Jesse Tingle’s Spring 2012 English 101-Effective Writing course. This is the only first semester composition course included in the study. Tingle has taught college English at Tougaloo College for six years. Tingle’s English 101 course at Tougaloo College focuses on improving writing and communication overall. The books for the course are: Subject and Strategy: A Writer’s Reader, The Allyn & Bacon Handbook, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Macbeth. As far as addressing language use, Tingle’s syllabus states that students are expected to “Use Standard English in class, both written and spoken: Tougaloo’s students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the use of Standard
English in class, written and spoken” (Tingle). So, it seems there is not only an emphasis on writing all assignments using Standard English but also there is an emphasis on speaking Standard English, as well. Of course, a classroom observation would be required to see how well this spoken portion of this policy is enforced. During the interview, Dr. Tingle said the purpose of his course is to help students with their formal English writing. Dr. Tingle shared, “One of the things they need is more vocabulary, so we explicitly cover vocabulary in the class. The biggest thing that it covers is being able to write easily and to understand the usual standards of formal correctness.” Tingle mentioned that he also has the students write a lot in class.

When asked why he chooses to use literature in his writing course, Dr. Tingle said, “It’s a personal decision. I don’t have to incorporate literature into the course… the book which comes with the course here does have some pieces of literature in it, but the degree to which the teacher chooses to use them is totally open. I choose to add more literature to the course. It’s a personal choice. I think it’s useful.” He also pointed out that he appreciates how literature looks at different kinds of language. I interviewed two students of Tingle’s, Jared Jameson and Nyesha Peyton, to get their views on literature in the composition classroom. Jared mentions an example of possibly writing about the Iliad, but says, “I’ll write something that can be like related to it but not so much as that” (Jameson). When asked if she enjoyed writing about literature such as the short stories, poems, and plays, Nyesha commented, “Not really, but… I’m okay to write about ‘em, but I prefer to write about something that’s like dealing with me or everyday life” (Peyton). Both Tougaloo students expressed indifferent reactions to writing about literature, as they seemed “okay” with it but not enthusiastic about it.

Overall, the three instructors’ syllabi all address analysis and critical thinking and studying literature through the various genres. All of the syllabi focus on correctly using
Standard English and oral and written communication. Also, the syllabi from Stillman College and Tuskegee University both focus on research since the courses are second semester composition. The syllabi were similar as well in terms of using African American texts for the course.

African American Texts in the Composition Classroom

Some instructors use texts with African American English to help students understand AAE and see it printed on the page and to appreciate its beauty. These types of texts show students that AAE can be written and used successfully. On the other hand, some teachers avoid African American texts with AAE such as Zora Neal Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* because it has “too much AAE” in it (Redd 77). Students should read these texts alongside classics. Redd writes, “there is some evidence that having students read and write about African American texts develops more positive attitudes toward writing” (99-100).

Dr. Tanner chooses to use texts by African American authors for two reasons. Tanner said, “I think the first thing is because I’m at a HBCU.” It is clear that he understands the context, the environment, and the importance of place. Secondly, he uses African American texts because currently the African American Literature I and II courses at Stillman College are not required for the English majors. Tanner says, “The high chance that students will have the opportunity to be exposed to African American writers would either be in those elective courses or in my respective English courses.” He makes certain to have his students study some of the texts in the textbook that are by African American authors. Dr. Tanner mentioned that his students read Gwendolyn Bennett’s “Heritage”, Maya Angelou’s “Phenomenal Woman”, and Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool”, along with “Everyday Use” and “Salvation”. He said,
“With me being at an HBCU, why not give the students exposure to that” (Tanner). Also, he makes sure to cover these pieces because he is African American. From looking at the syllabus, I notice many other texts by African American authors, such as James Baldwin, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Claude McKay, Nikki Giovanni, Lorraine Hansberry, and Fredrick Douglass (Tanner 5-7). He felt like his class would be a great opportunity to expose the first-year students to African American literature in his course because although the African American literature courses are not required, the first-year writing courses are.

For Dr. Winston’s course, students are required to memorize and recite one of President Barack Obama’s speeches to the class. Students are asked to analyze these speeches, as well. Some of the African American texts Winston assigns include “I Too” by Langston Hughes. During the interview, Kendrick commented on his instructor’s use of African American texts. Kendrick said, “I like the fact that she does keep it quite diverse. Not just, you know, classic English literature whatever. …She does have a lot of African American poems and plays that we have to read over. Matter of fact, my next paper is for the play for *Fences*” (Minor). His remark shows that he enjoys writing about African American texts.

African American texts are invaluable to students’ writing and should certainly appear alongside George Orwell and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Teresa Redd agrees, stating that several anthologies “scatter a few African American essays across the table of contents” (76). Redd’s commentary on the infrequency of African American texts in an instructor’s writing curriculum may confirm that African American texts seem minimal as compared to other races or that these texts may seem out of place altogether. Redd argues that Composition 101 has moved toward a “Great Essays” cannon which includes only a few African American authors, consequently perpetuating the “white experience” (75 & 76). Just as Redd hopes to avoid privileging the
“white experience,” David Holmes adds that a lack of exposure to African American texts distorts students’ perceptions of American culture. Using African American texts in the writing classroom also helps students understand the African American culture, especially as it relates to issues of literacy and illiteracy among African Americans. As many early African American writers and orators were slaves and abolitionists, Redd feels that African American texts provide evidence that African Americans come from an essay tradition despite that they were thought of as illiterate. Many students who have not been exposed to African American texts may initially associate these texts with a people who come from slavery and, thus, illiteracy, yet Ampadu argues that, “African American texts should no longer be associated with a history and tradition of illiteracy…” (138). Using African American texts in the writing classroom helps teach students the history and culture of African Americans.

**Literature in the Composition Classroom**

As I mentioned earlier, a common thread among all of the writing courses is the use of literature to teaching writing. Each instructor provided his or her rationale for using literature in the composition course. Some expressed personal decisions for doing so, while others were departmental decisions. A prominent debate about literature-based writing courses took place in 1992 between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Derived from the conference proceedings, articles by these two scholars were soon published. The overarching question was: Should literature be included in first-year writing classes? Lindemann’s position was that literature did not have a place in the composition course while Tate believed that it did. Lindemann asserts, “When freshmen read and write about imaginative literature alone, they remain poorly prepared for the writing required of
them in courses outside the English department” (311). Lindemann argued against using literature in composition courses for five main reasons. The first is that focusing on literature requires students to spend more time reading than writing which she describes as “consuming texts, not producing them” (Lindemann 313). The second is that an undergraduate curriculum already has “humanistic content” and that many students will learn this information in other classes like art and literature courses (Lindemann 313). The third is that teaching literature does not teach style (Lindemann 314). Theory provides new information about how to read and interpret texts but that does not mean requiring instructors to use literature in order to apply these skills (Lindemann 314). And lastly, it does not enhance graduate training programs as some scholars believe (Lindemann 315). The ultimate goal of Lindemann’s essay is to urge composition scholars and instructors to think carefully about the purpose of a first-year writing course. In responding to findings that many composition programs at that time included very little literature, Tate argued that, “We have denied students who are seeking to improve their writing the benefits of reading an entire body of excellent writing. It is not unlike telling music students that they should not listen to Bach or Mahler” (317). He provides three reasons why he thinks literature has been neglected from the writing courses. First, he admits that it is due to teachers’ mistakes in the past (Tate 317). Second, Tate blames “Rhetoric Police” and the new focus on Rhetoric (318). And, third, Tate identifies evolving views on the purpose of freshman composition as the cause (317). After this debate, responses from other scholars followed and well as a symposium in 1995 that both Lindemann and Tate took part in. Then, Lindeman and Tate wrote follow-up articles. Years later, this conversation is ongoing among composition scholars today. Moreover, I have taught first-year writing courses at Kansas State University and at the University of Alabama, and neither of these two institution’s first-year writing courses
incorporated literature into the class. My experiences show that this is one way that PWIs and HBCUs differ in writing instruction methods.

The Ties that Bind…

I now focus on the connections among the mission statements, syllabi, and student and instructor interviews from each institution. I explore how the three HBCUs’ mission statements are brought to life and carried out. Do these HBCUs practice what they preach?

Stillman College

There is a connection between Stillman’s mission statement, syllabus, and instructor’s views. The mission statement declares that Stillman serves a “diverse population with disparate levels of academic preparation” (“Mission”) and Dr. Tanner was well aware of the students he teaches. He states, “We have students who are not as prepared as we would like for them to be prepared when they come into our English classes” (Tanner). He speaks of the institution’s mission statement and says, “First of all, the mission, it pretty much lets you know that we’re dealing with a particular group of students, right. And these particular groups of students don’t necessarily have the resources available to them that, you know, say for instance, an Ivy League school has, right” (Tanner). Also, Stillman’s mission statement covers preparing students for graduate school and careers. Likewise, Dr. Tanner stated, “What we want to produce are well-rounded, critical thinkers who are able to stand on their own two feet once they graduate from here and probably provide a good name for the college once they move on to the next level.”

Dr. Tanner’s syllabus also ties in with the mission statement because there is a clear connection to research and critical thinking. The mission statement calls for “independent
research” which is the focus of English 132. The syllabus also asks for critical thinking skills as the students analyze the various genres of literature. However, Dr. Tanner says his students struggle with research the most. He says that the students struggle with synthesizing the information that they gather (Tanner). But, he constantly provides encouragement and asks students to provide evidence for their claims.

**Tuskegee University**

Tuskegee’s mission statement addresses written and oral language use, as well as literary. Winston’s syllabus aligns with this statement because as the students write papers, they are also required to recite one of President Obama’s speeches, which gives the students practice with their oral communication. They also focus on the literary, as suggested by the mission statement, because the students study various works and genres of literature. The mission statement says that it hopes to “equip students with strong research interests and skills” (“University Mission”) and her class focuses on helping student to “become familiar with the kinds of research techniques that they will use in future course work” (“University Mission”).

**Tougaloo College**

The mission statement at Tougaloo wants students to be “mindful thinkers” and to “apply critical thoughts to all areas of life” (“About Tougaloo College”). The instructor’s syllabus also asks for critical thinking “to formulate topics of discourse in class discussion and to determine fruitful avenues of investigation in open-ended writing assignments” (Tingle). The mission statements says that Tougaloo should be “accessible to all persons”, and the instructor’s syllabus
makes a very clear diversity statement about being welcoming and respectful of others (“About Tougaloo College”). The Diversity Statement reads:

Tougaloo College [is] committed to creating a community that affirms and welcomes persons from diverse backgrounds and experiences and supports the realization of their human potential. We recognize that there are difference[s] among groups of people and individual[s] based on ethnicity, race[,] socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area. All person[s] [are] encouraged to respect the individual differences of others. (Tingle)

Dr. Tingle’s syllabus is the only syllabus of the three that addresses diversity at the institution. When asked about Tougaloo’s mission statement, Tingle said, “I think everything at the college should match up with the mission statement of the institution. I think a writing course certainly should. And, I think it can.” As Tougaloo’s mission statement states that it is a historically Black, liberal arts institution, Tingle also said, “At a liberal arts school like this one, we want the students to know a lot about the world.” The institution expects students to “acquire a basic knowledge of the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences” (“About Tougaloo College”).

In the next chapter, I explore the students’ and instructors’ thoughts on African American English alongside the students’ first essay for their first-year writing course.
CHAPTER FOUR: AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

In this chapter, I focus on African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition in the first-year writing classroom at the three HBCUs. This chapter uncovers the composition instructors’ pedagogy as it relates to AAE and their views on the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution. Then, after presenting the students’ views on AAE, I analyze the essays of seven first-year writing students to uncover if and/or how features of AAE and AART surface in the students’ writing and provide the instructors’ response on how they grade any instances of AAE in students’ papers. I also suggest a statement pertaining to African American English to be included on each first-year writing syllabus. The essays and interviews prove to be fertile ground for analyzing and understanding the role of AAE at HBCUs.

A Birdseye View -- HBCU Students’ Views of AAE

From conducting this study, I found that the student participants did not have a clear understanding of African American English. The students provided a variety of different definitions and descriptions of AAE. However, African American English is defined as: “the variety of English spoken by many African Americans. It reflects the combination of African languages and Euro-American English. It is a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans’ appropriation and transformation of a foreign tongue during slavery” (Redd & Webb 129 and Smitherman 19). I think the important component of this definition is that AAE is a set of systematic features, ones that are consistent with vast speakers, from vast
regions, over multiple generations. What linguists mostly want us to understand about AAE is that, though it may differ from those “standard” features that we all learn, trust, and employ, the features of this language or dialect are not random. They are systematic and learned, and it is that aspect of AAE that make it worthy of exploration and discussion within the discourse community of its users, both in the academy and beyond. Rickford and Rickford address two important points for those who may be skeptical of AAE: (1) AAE must have rules in order for its speakers to communicate with one another successfully. (2) AAE must have rules in order for its speakers to learn and speak it year after year, generation after generation (208). The two crucial points show the legitimacy of the language.

During the interview, I asked each student: How would you define African American English, which is commonly referred to as Ebonics? Malcolm said, “Ebonics is a I guess a language that was originated I guess to kinda help African Americans have a dialect” (King). Kelly said, “I don’t really know. I say like the way we write and talk like a certain way. … You know how you text something and you say it like that” (Johnson). Malcolm was able to connect AAE to being a dialect; however, Kelly admits that she really is not sure how to define AAE but ties it incorrectly to text language, which consists of the abbreviations used to send short, quick messages when using a cellular device. These students’ comments suggest that they are not totally confident in defining African American English correctly. Malcolm is one of the few students who, though hesitantly, actually referred to AAE as a language. Kelly’s definition seems to simply equate AAE to the short, abbreviated words we use when sending texts. I would like to see these students be able to proudly and firmly define African American English.

When asked to define AAE, Shayla said, “I define it as lazy. … I’m guessing it’s deprived [sic] from like back in the slave days. We heard how the masters talked and
everything, and then we weren’t educated. So, we didn’t know how to talk” (Steele). Shayla provides more of a stereotype of AAE, and the characteristic that she provides is a common misconception of AAE. Many people refer to AAE as “broken English, ‘lazy English,’ or simply “bad English” (Redd & Webb 4). Kendrick said, “Ebonics is just pretty much slang. Just every culture has they own slang” (Minor). Teresa Redd and Karen Webb write, “But AAE is much more than slang, for slang consists of short-lived, informal words coined and shared by a limited group…AAE, on the other hand, includes words that have endured for decades, known primarily to African Americans regardless of age, gender, class, or region” (7). AAE is not comprised of a few key vocabulary words; the language is far more complex than that. Rather, AAE consist of distinct grammatical rules.

To provide a definition for AAE, Jared said, “I guess the way African Americans talk…like we can go back to the old, old days where they talked in certain codes. And, I guess the Ebonics part can be coded to where, I guess, if you sitting there talking about something and you don’t want anybody else to know” (Jameson). Jarred links AAE to codes, speaking of AAE as if it is might be a secret language. Nyesha said, “It’s mostly slang. We use words that are not in the dictionary like ain’t. Like we don’t use correct grammar most of the time” (Peyton). Nyesha, like Kendrick, incorrectly defines AAE as slang, and just limits the definition to a collection of words and vocabulary. By Standard American English guidelines, the grammar African American English speakers use is not considered correct, but according to the rules of AAE, the grammar of AAE speakers is correct.

Those students who mention the way African Americans talk and that AAE comes from slavery provide a description of AAE that is close to the actual definition, but, overall, these students have a misconception of the language they speak. I believe that these students’ lack of
understanding of AAE contributes to their negative perceptions of this language. Unfortunately, the students degraded their own speech by speaking of African American English as lazy, slang, secretive, and incorrect. None of the students’ definitions included positive views of African American English. HBCU students, if any, should truly grasp the definition of this language given the historical setting and context of their universities since HBCUs were put in place to educate African American students. These students do not portray much appreciation and respect for the language that is often spoken by African American students. In talking with these students, I realized that they viewed AAE negatively and as something that should be avoided when possible. My goal is to help students gain a better understanding and appreciation for AAE.

All students, when asked if they would be interested in learning more about the history and rules of African American English, expressed interest in learning more about AAE for various reasons—ranging from wanting to know more about the history, culture and origin, desiring personal knowledge about the race in order to understand others and educate others, and expressing curiosity about the rationale for this language. When asked this question about learning more about the rules of AAE, Kendrick said, “I’m not…sure ‘bout…[that]. I, ‘cause, I can’t even tell you whether it’s a general rule. Guess that would be interesting to know, but I just never just thought about [it]” (Minor). Kendrick seemed startled at the possibility that AAE could possibly have rules, even though he is actually speaking AAE during the interview and applying the rules of the language. Redd and Webb argue, “Because we do not study AAE in school the way we study Standard English, most of us do not recognize the complexity of AAE…” (7). I believe that if students learned the rules behind the language, they would be pleasantly surprised and proud.
Instructors’ Views on Teaching AAE

Keith Gilyard puts forth three basic views on AAE; these three camps are called the eradicationist, pluralist, and bidialectalist. The writing instructor who is an eradicationist wants AAE to be far removed from the writing classroom and usually thrives on grammar to drive AAE away. The instructor who is a pluralist wants the world we live in to accept AAE, so he/she focuses on changing society’s views rather than the students’ views, hoping to make AAE acceptable in society and in the classroom. A bidialectalist focuses on teaching students to code-switch and use both AAE and SAE because SAE is needed for success (Gilyard 70-71).

An instructor’s view of language often affects the students’ view of that language, so during the interviews with the three instructors, I wanted to gather their thoughts and views on teaching AAE at an HBCUs. Which of the three camps are the instructors interviewed a part of? Do instructors at HBCUs teach African American English? And, if so how? What are their views on African American English and “Students’ Right to their Own Language”?

Stillman College instructor Dr. Tanner stated, “No, I do not teach African American English. No, I do not discuss or teach African American rhetoric.” He added, “I think they [students] do expect to read the kind of literature that they read coming out of high school. They don’t expect to just be turned completely around to read something that maybe Elaine Richardson had written.” Although Dr. Tanner does not teach AAE and AART, he made it clear that his African American English often comes out in class when he communicates with his students. Dr. Tanner also made it a point not to discourage students when they use AAE when speaking in class. He stated that sometimes when discussing a lesson from the anthology, a
student may give an answer in African American English. Dr. Tanner said, “I don’t shut that person’s manner in talking down. I contribute by also providing African American English so that way other people can get involved.” Dr. Tanner does not try to eradicate AAE from his classroom, but instead focuses on students feeling comfortable enough to use AAE in the classroom in order that he might encourage them to engage in the class and discuss rather than shy away. Because Dr. Tanner is an African American, he chooses to go the extra mile to show the African American students that AAE is mutual between them.

Tuskegee, Dr. Winston mentioned, “The only way that I deal with it [AAE] is at the beginning of the semester in 101. We talk about code-switching and that there are many ways to express yourself, and one is not necessarily better than the other. But, this is a tool that they need to develop in order to do well in the outside world.” Like Dr. Tanner, Dr. Winston does not teach AAE in her first-year writing course but briefly discusses AAE and code-switching during the first part of the two-course sequence. She tells her student not to value one language over another and encourages code-switching in order for them to achieve success in the “outside world”. Dr. Winston, like other HBCU instructors, keeps in mind the importance of preparing her students for the “outside world”, that “real world” that students must enter upon graduation. Dr. Winston’s view correlates to Tuskegee’s mission statement because the mission emphasizes “a career orientation” and “the relationship between education and employment” (“University Mission”). Employment and a career are exactly what students will need to think about once they exit the university doors; so, Dr. Winston is keen on making sure that students are prepared for their professions.

Dr. Tingle at Tougaloo College stated, “I feel that it’s important for me to address in class, maybe even the more so because I’m a white guy teaching in a room with mostly black
students, most of the time. I want to make sure that everything’s comfortable between them and me.” Being of a different race than his students, Dr. Tingle feels that it is important to touch on AAE. He always does that in the first few days of his English 101 and 102 classes. He said, “I talk about the difference between formal and informal language. Usually, I do not bring up the idea of Black English or African American Vernacular English. Usually, I do not bring that up at first, but almost always the students bring it up when I bring up the topic of formal versus informal.” He chooses not to bring up the BE or AAVE labels because when he first arrived at Tougaloo College and used those labels in his classes, he felt that some of the students were somewhat uncomfortable with that. He discovered that some students just did not like the labels and did not like being put into certain categories. I am glad that Dr. Tingle wants his students to feel comfortable, but also still discusses, even if only briefly, what can be a tough topic in class, especially with the race differences. However, I believe that it would be beneficial for Dr. Tingle to make the name of the language, African American English, known up front so that students will be aware of the actual name and the validity of the language. I also believe that the uncomfortable feeling that the instructor and the students have with this label of African American English certainly calls for dialogue about what components of the name of the language make them uncomfortable. During his class discussion, Dr. Tingle talks about informal and formal by putting these labels as headers for two columns on the board and then starts “asking for examples of expressions, words, phrases, forms of words that’ll go in one of these two categories.” He added that the students enjoy providing their own examples and discussing language in this way and that everybody, no matter where they are from, participates. He made sure to add, “I realize that that’s sort of an artificial dichotomy. The world is not always formal or informal, but we kind of do have those categories.” Again, a concern here is that students will
more than likely automatically equate African American English with the informal category, which they may see as the lesser of the two.

I believe that instructors’ attitudes towards AAE, whether written or spoken, are very important to the student’s sense of self-esteem and to the students’ writing. An instructor’s attitude toward AAE could directly affect a student’s own view of AAE and his or her culture as well as the student’s performance. If an instructor refers to AAE as slang, street talk, ghetto, mistakes, errors, or grammatically incorrectly, students will likely simply adopt these views without question. These negative views of AAE will be accepted because they come from their instructor, an authority in education that the students deem as trustworthy and knowledgeable. In addition, an instructor’s negative view of AAE does not always have to be verbalized for students to pick up the instructor’s negative perspective. An instructor’s negative gestures, facial expressions, and marginal and end comments on a student’s paper could work in the same fashion. Writing instructors must respect and appreciate their students’ language; otherwise, students may become hesitant to write or say anything in class if they know their instructor has a negative view of AAE.

I found from that data that I collected that all of these instructors seem to be a bidialectalist because they allow AAE in the classroom and are generally receptive to it, but believe that SAE is required in professional and academic settings and is necessary for success in a career and in the “real world.”
Students’ First Major Paper

In this section, I analyze the essays, particularly focusing on features of AAE. There are several features of African American English, but I’ll briefly address a few and provide some examples.

- Absence of copula for contracted forms of *is* and *are*
  
  An example: She nice.

- Habitual *be* for habitual or intermittent activity
  
  An example: My ears be itching.

- Use of *done* for completed action (can co-occur with *been*)
  
  An example: They done been sitting there a whole hour.

These features appeared the most in the students’ essays.

- Possessive –s absence
  
  An example: Damon car for Damon’s car

- General plural –s absence
  
  An example: a lot of time for a lot of times

- Present tense, third-person –s absence
  
  An example: she walk for she walks

- Use of the verb stem
  
  An example: I look for him last night.

(Redd & Webb and Smitherman and Wolfrom & Schillings-Estes)

Again, this is a partial list of the features that are most likely to distinguish AAE from Standard American English. I also want to provide the disclaimer that some of these features may appear
in the papers of students who are not African American; however, scholars have cited these features as distinguishing features of AAE.

I discuss the assignment sheets briefly and then examine the students’ essays. Dr. Tanner’s first major paper of the semester focuses on comparing and contrasting two short stories in Unit 1 of the textbook, using either characterization, setting, conflict, plot, narration/point of view, and literary devices. Dr. Winston’s assignment sheet asks students to interpret one of the short stories in the textbook. The paper must include a thesis, support, examples, and the use of critical sources, and it should be written in MLA style. Dr. Tingle’s assignment comes from Chapter 5 on “Description” of the textbook by Paul Escholz and Alfred Rosa entitled *Subject and Strategy*. Students were asked to describe something of their choice in two pages, in MLA format. I read the essays closely to see if or how students incorporated AAE into their papers.

**Malcolm**

This student opens his essay with a personal story as a way to connect his life to the two stories being analyzed. This student focuses on the importance of home and family in his first major essay. This relates to the culturally relevant pedagogy because the student is able to make a connection between the two short stories and his own life. The student makes the connection to home really clear in his thesis as he writes that “there’s no place like home” (King 1).

- The student uses the phrase “had each other” in the essay to describe how the brothers supported one another (King 4). The student’s use of this phrase comes from a common

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11 Please see the appendix for the the writing prompts for Stillman College and Tuskegee University.

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saying in the African American community of having someone’s back. The phrase is a recognizable and important term from the vocabulary that is associated with African American English.

- The student writer also discusses how one of the brother’s life was a testimony—basically a living testimony. A testimony is very apparent in the Black church and is a part of the African American rhetoric as related to pulpit and religious rhetoric.

- Malcolm describes the disagreement between Jay and Demetric as a “Tyson versus Holyfield style argument” (King 1) as a way to provide a sense of humor, a major part of AART. Malcolm uses his essay to compare the two stories, all while relating the discussion to his family, religious experience, and playful sense of humor (which was evident during the interview). I find it interesting that Malcolm’s essay connects to what he values – his family, upbringing, and personality.

**Kelly**

Kelly’s essay also includes distinct feature of African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition.

- The first sentence reads: “The location and how the story is told determine the outcome of one situation, don’t you think?” (Johnson 1). This example is identified as call and response and is common in the African American community. Call and Response is described in the secular manner as “…a back-and-forth banter between the speaker and

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12 The names in the essay have been changed.
various members of the audience” (Smitherman, *Talkin that Talk* 64). This rhetorical move is also a part of pulpit rhetoric and is especially popular in the Black church. The writer tries to engage with her audience and get them involved. She acknowledges the reader with the pronoun “you”. The student writer asks a question as if she is speaking directly to the audience and if she is expecting an answer, even though she she knows that she cannot get a response. Also, this move works to provide a form of cosigning as if to say, clearly the reader must agree. For some, the use of a conversational tone in which the writer seems to be speaking directly to the reader goes against academic writing because of the use of “you” and not referring to readers in third person. Thus, we see a very conversational tone, which goes back to the point that many students may write like they speak. One instructor may read it and say that the student should not use “you” and is not being objective, while another instructor may look at that and appreciate the student for trying to engage the reader with an attention-grabber at the beginning of the essay.

- There is also the lack of a possessive. Kelly writes: “The narrator, which is the twelve year old, opinion and actions are only being expressed” (Johnson 2). There is an absence of the possessive for narrator, which is a prominent feature of African American English. Redd and Webb write, “The presence of contextual clues also accounts for the AAE possessive” (30). Thus, the writer assumes that the reader will observe that since narrator comes before opinion, then the position of the words should let readers know that the possessive is intended.

- Kelly uses big words, such as *prodigiously* repeatedly, as well as other “fancy” words like *immense* and *proclaims*. Balester refers to this as “High Style” and “Fancy Talk”. 69
Balester states that “fancy talk” helps a student “successfully construct an impressive ethos” which she says is “useful to BEV speakers” (93). During the interview, Kelly explains, “I also used dictionary.com so I wouldn’t use like so many simple words, so I could use more like college terms” (Johnson).

**Kelvin**

Kelvin’s essay has a few issues mainly with subject-verb agreement and using the verb stem.

- Kelvin writes in his essay, “Growing up in the rough streets of Harlem, New York sonny and his brother was always surrounded by drugs and violence” (Jeem 1). Kelvin has a subject-verb agreement issue in this sentence because even though he refers to two people, Sonny and Sonny’s brother, he uses *was* instead of *were*. In African American English, *is* and *was* are often used with plural subjects (Redd and Webb 35).

- His essay also reads: “the narrator bring sonny back” (Jeem 1). This is an example of the absence of 3rd person singular present tense –s. In African American English, the verb “does not require an –s ending to show that [it] takes a third-person singular subject in the present tense” (Redd and Webb 34).

- Similar to the example above, Kelvin writes: “sonny find a job” (Jeem 2). This example is another instance of present tense –s, third person –s absence.

- Kelvin essay reads, “him getting busted was a complete shock” (Jeem 1). Here, an object pronoun is used for the subject of the sentence.

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13 Kelvin submitted an essay but did not complete the interview.
• Kelvin writes, “that when most of the older women got worry” (Jeem 2). In this example, Kelvin does not use the past tense of the verb, “worry”. In African American English, the –ed ending is not necessary. Redd and Webb point out that AAE, like African languages, emphasizes “how something happened than when it happened” (32).

**Shayla**

Shayla’s essay includes example of the African American rhetorical tradition and relates to a culturally relevant topic.

• She addresses racial stereotypes about her culture and about African Americans. She writes, “For example, other races think that black people only eat fried chicken, drink cool aid and listen to rap music” (Steele 1). She writes about racism and racial profiling and prejudices, a topic that often pervades African Americans’ conversations.

• After discussing the typical image of whites in the media. She writes: “Why is this seen as better?” (Steele 2). She then goes on to answer the question: “Because that what (non-whites) are told” (Steele 2). She goes on to repeat: “Look in the magazines…Look in the movies” (Steele 2). She asks, “Do the lighter actors outweigh the darker actors?” (Steele 2). Shayla asks questions and uses call and response. She answers one of the questions herself. She uses repetition (anaphora) to really drive her point home.
**Kendrick**

In this essay, I noticed subject-verb agreement issues and the absence of possessives.

- Kendrick writes: “Miss Emily’s start down the path of social decay and madness seem to begin with the death of her father” (Minor 2). When writing in Standard American English, *seem* should be *seems*.

- Kendrick’s essay reads: “Emily act was a case of her trying to never be left along again by the men in her life, trying to hold onto that moment and person forever” (Minor 4). In this sentence, the possessive –s is absent. Once again, the student expects the reader to use context clues to determine the possessive.

- Kendrick also writes, “Just as the corpse of her lover Homer, so too had Miss Emily life decayed away” (Minor 4). Here is another example of the possessive –s absence in Kendrick’s essay.

**Jared**

In Jared’s essay, I noticed issues with subject-verb agreement. Also, the essay included African American English vocabulary. These words are commonly used and understood in the African American community. Also, the essay used humor and included some issues with there/here statements.

- Jared writes, “I am really glad I chose Tougaloo because it is some extraordinary people here” (Jameson 1). To achieve Standard American English, the student should have written *there are*. 
• His essay includes the following sentence: “She talks like a scholar, but have poise like the Queen of England” (Jameson 1). This sentence has issues with subject and verb agreement because the student should have written *has* instead of *have*.

• Jared writes, “…she can just *read you* from the sight of you” (emphasis added) (Jameson 1). The concept of “reading” someone is common in the African American community, which is the ability to tell what someone is about immediately upon meeting them or to “go off” verbally on someone.

• Jared uses another common phrase in the African American community: “Yes she is a *keeper on my team*…” (emphasis added) (Jameson 2). “Keeper on my team” is a recognizable phrase from the vocabulary of African American English. Redd and Webb write that “these words include but are not limited to slang” (20).

• Jared writes in his essay: “where she has came from” (Jameson 2). This is alternative perfective forms in AAE (Redd and Webb 34).

• Jared writes in the letter to his father, “or you can just let me have total access to your account because that would be even better” (Jameson 2). We know that this student does not really expect his father to give him access to his bank account, but he incorporates the use of humor into his essay.

Jared realized that he used African American English in his essay. He said, “I know that I did use Ebonics and, you know, I did a little slang, but I guess that’s how me and my daddy used to talk so … . And like I said, since, since it was descriptive, I mean, I was describing my life as a child; that’s how I talked. I mean, it’s just not so much as what you write; it’s how you write, too, that can be used to describe the person…. ” In this essay, Jared wanted to make certain that
his language seemed realistic so he purposely chose to write to his father in a manner that he would actually speak to his father. He wanted the conversation to seem real.

**Nyesh**

Nyesh’s essay includes some very distinct features of AAE, including verb stem issues, lack of the possessive, and lack of the plural.

- Nyesh writes in her essay: “until I stop going to church” (Peyton 1). As mentioned previously, this example is a verb stem issue which is common in AAE. In this example, Nyesh has not truly achieved the past tense form of the verb in Standard American English.

- She writes, “after they receive the letter” (Peyton 2). Nyesh has another verb stem issue here. Given the full context of the sentence, Nyesh intended to use the past tense of receive.

- Nyesh writes, “because we did not fully understand the cause of my mother death” (Peyton 2). This example shows the absence of the possessive. Again, since mother comes before death in the sentence, the reader is expected to realize that the possessive is necessary.

- Nyesh’s essay reads: “they did not try to take her to any of her doctor appointment” (Peyton 2). Absence of the plural is an issue here; Nyesh wanted to convey that there was more than one doctor’s appointment. The writer assumes that by using “any of her”

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14 Nyesh’s first essay for the course was a narrative rather than a description. Due to personal issues, she was unable to submit the description essay to her instructor.
before doctor appointment, the reader will know that appointment is intended to be plural.

- Nyesha writes, “…I wrote my feeling that I felt towards everything.” (Peyton 2). The AAE feature here addresses the absence of the plural –s.

When studying Black English Vernacular (BEV), as Balester calls it, in students’ papers, she finds that the appearance of BEV in writing “is either a slip or a deliberate manipulation of style” (142). From one student’s paper, Balester notes: “It certainly appears to be an accidental use of informal dialect—not a deliberate attempt to sound informal or ‘African American’ (142).” In general, this seems to be the case, except for Jared who uses AAE because he wants the conversation between him and his father to be realistic. Patrick Hartwell believes that when students do not know a certain feature of the “print code”, they have to resort to their oral rules and practices (108-109). For African American English speakers, this can pose a problem since their oral practices are usually nonstandard.

How Instructors Respond to Written AAE

The way that composition instructors refer to AAE features once they appear in a student’s paper is very important. Instructors’ attitudes about language are often passed on to their students. Thus, an instructor should not contribute to students’ having a negative view of AAE. Should instructors call them errors or mistakes? Some call it a “writing miscue” (Wolfro, Adger, and Christian 135) since it is dialectical, while others prefer the term “language choice” (Kamusikiri 198). At Stillman College, Dr. Tanner told his first-year writing students that he has a problem with saying that the use of AAE is a mistake or an error. He prefers to call it an inappropriate move made in the paper. Redd and Webb posit, “AAE grammatical features are
not errors; they simply conform to a different set of rules than Standard Written English does” (29). Writing instructors must exercise caution with the language used to label features of AAE and when marking papers that incorporate features of AAE. Dr. Winston said, “I don’t point out that they’re using vernacular. I just deal with the grammatical issues, so if they leave the endings off of words, you know, we refer to that as subject-verb not agreeing.” Dr. Tingle said:

[T]he majority of the red marks that I make on papers are in fact changes, translations from African American English to formal writing. Really most of the changes are exactly that. … Occasionally, they’ll be some great totally informal expression used, and depending on what the writing’s about, I will write on it saying --- that’s a great informal expression; it seems completely appropriate here given that you are talking about this or that you’re talking in this manner. But, since most of what I’m doing is teaching what formal language is so that students can use it when they wish, I’ll still put a mark down saying --- okay, if we wanted to make this formal, we might say this, but in this case, why bother. This is totally cool.

Dr. Tingle provides an example of what he might write on a student’s paper when features of AAE appear; he makes certain not to use the words error or mistake and is very positive with his comments about the use of informal language.

With grading and assessment, many teachers only focus on AAE in the final drafts and only count off for it then (Wilson 52). They do not count off for using AAE in pre-writing exercises and blogs. Taking a similar approach, Dr. Tanner said, “I have my students complete journal entries and/or blogs. So, in there, I’m not as rigorous in terms of what it is they produce,
and I think that allows them a sense of relief.” However, there is a grading rubric that the department has, and he counts off anything that goes against the rubric in a student’s major paper. Dr. Tanner said, “I have that agreed upon rubric. It doesn’t say anything about, you know, accept students’ home language at, you know, certain points in the paper, no. It’s strictly to the rules in terms of what it is all of us agreed on.” To give students the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas, teachers often allow blogs, journals, and discussion boards to become “safe houses for AAE” (Canagarajah 180). I believe that more freedom can take place under these circumstances because students can express their ideas in blogs, journals, and discussion boards without worrying about perfect grammar and language choices. Instead, students can just focus on their ideas and content. Also, writing instructors do not usually use rubrics or strict grading guidelines for writing in these forms. In these cases, where students feel less judgment of their grammar, the students are more likely to relax and just write.

**Students’ Responses to Using AAE in Academic Papers**

The six student participants had mixed responses about whether AAE should be used in an academic paper. I asked each student participant: Do you use African American English in your papers for class? Why or why not?

Malcolm said, “I don’t unless I’m citing something like from a modern, well not modern, but from a older time, where say it was like a slave something or something where Ebonics is used. If I’m citing that then I’ll use it but as far as using it now, I don’t because many people won’t understand it. And, it’s not as accepted as the, I guess, correct or the proper English use.” Malcolm is okay with quoting someone else’s use of AAE in his paper but does not use AAE of his own because he thinks his readers would not understand it. On the other hand, Kelly
responded, “It depends on what I’m writing about. Yes--to give an example or to relate to the reader more, and No -- if it’s like a more formal paper.” Both Stillman students point out that they would not use AAE in an academic or formal paper.

When asked if she uses AAE in papers, Shayla immediately responded, “Never. I never use it because this is a professional setting, and the only time I ever use Ebonics in a paper is if I’m quoting a book or I’m quoting someone else -- not, not, I don’t personally, I don’t personally use it in my papers.” She went on to add that college students should know how to pronounce and spell their words rather than taking shortcuts (Steele). While Shayla was completely against the idea of using AAE in papers, her fellow Tuskegee classmate Kendrick said, “Not this semester, but my first semester for English 10 in which we had to do a personal paper and everything, it was a couple of sentences, you know, where I was doing quotes from what was actually said which I did use Ebonics ‘cause that was actually what was said” (Minor). Kendrick is comfortable with using AAE in more personal papers, but still only gives an example of using AAE when he is quoting someone else.

Jared stated that he does use AAE in some of his papers and explains how it occurs: “you visualizing the conversation or you just visualize when you talking, and it just caught me typing talk” (Jameson). Nyesha said, “Yes, but I try not to. It just slips in, like I write the way I text” (Peyton). Both Tougaloo students said that they use AAE in papers, though not always necessarily intentionally. Jared and Nyesha both shared concerns about if their audience would understand the AAE, especially Nyesha who worried that a white instructor would not be able to understand her.

Overall, these six HBCU students do not think that AAE should be used in academic papers; thus, they do not purposely incorporate their own AAE into their formal academic
papers. It seems that the students only use AAE if they are quoting some source that uses AAE or if AAE occasionally slips into their paper. The reasons ranged from AAE not being acceptable in academic and formal papers and professional settings to the fear that their audience would not understand them. These students possess negative views of African American English and do not deem it as formal enough to be used in essays or professional environments.

Professors’ Views on SRTOL

During the interviews, I asked the instructors about their views on SRTOL and whether they thought that this resolution was being fulfilled today. Dr. Tanner said, “…informally, yes; that is coming into fruition, informally.” He felt that some instructors are completely against it while some allow it in their classrooms. Dr. Tanner added, “That’s why I say informally because everyone’s not on board.” Dr. Tanner points out the fact that the resolution is not really being implemented when it comes to formal essays.

Tuskegee instructor Dr. Winston said:

I think that the students themselves, in spite of this declaration [that you’ve read] … they are expecting to be taught what we call Standard English - that this is what they want. But I have met very few students who felt like they were being taught a kind of language that they didn’t want to learn or that they they shouldn’t be expected to learn. And I feel that it’s also what the university expects me to do, so if I did not teach them that I wouldn’t be fulfilling what I was hired for.

Dr. Winston raises an interesting point when she mentions that she does not believe that students come to Tuskegee to learn AAE. She stated that her job is to teach the students Standard American English. Most students want to learn Standard English and write in SAE; after all, that
is what they come to college for. However, the problem surfaces when students value SAE more than AAE.

Tougaloo instructor Dr. Tingle said:

“No, not at all. It’s a very idealistic resolution. I wish it reflected the way the world was. … There are parts of it, parts of that resolution that I wholeheartedly agree with and that I think are to a large degree upheld and can be fruitfully upheld. And, there are other parts that I don’t think are upheld, and, I’m not really sure it’s possible. One of the parts that I really like is asserting the value of many different dialects. I totally agree with that. In any way that we can help people appreciate their own dialects and those of others, I think is a good thing. … There are other parts of the resolution that make me sigh and wish that this were a better world. One is the assumption that in, the apparent assumption, that in virtually any case, a person may use their own dialect and be respected for it. I would like that to be true. I don’t think that that’s the way the world is. I’ve had too many students not get jobs that they wanted to get because they could not, we’ve used this this metaphor before, they could not “put on the hat” of formal English during an interview or in front of a customer, which drives me crazy that the world is like that. Because the world is that way, I think it’s a useful skill for anybody to be able to go back and forth between whatever informal language that they like to use or maybe several kinds and more formal language. I think it’s very, a very useful skill. When I talk to students about this, I suggest that they, I would like them to be able to “put on the hat” of formal English when they want to. It’s a useful “hat”. It’s something that they can take back off and put in the
closet and get out when they want. In this this uh imperfect world, I mean that’s the way I I think of these uh skills. That resolution implies that the student may never need that “hat”; I think the “hat” is all too useful. And that’s why I, how can how can I push the metaphor into teaching? I I try to let students know where to get that “hat” when they want it.

These three instructors think the SRTOL is a great resolution but that it is not being fulfilled, unfortunately. Jesse Colquit’s position aligns with that of the three instructors interviewed. Colquit states, “Despite the assertion of Blacks for identity and the efforts of the CCCC (Conference on College Composition and Communication) to implement this policy statement, there have been no major institutional changes in speech and language programs from a Black perspective. Few schools recognize the legitimacy of the student’s right to his own language” (82). Along the same lines, Michael Pennell believes that the SRTOL is a strong statement, but maintains that the CCCC “…did not and have not adequately provided means to implement these resolutions. … [T]hey offer minimal teacher support and pedagogical tools to allow these resolutions to affect the first-year composition classroom” (229). Colquit points out that without actual pedagogical tools and teacher training and support to back up the statements, then the resolutions “become hypocritical, rhetorical ghosts with no substance below the ink and paper that embody the resolutions” (229). Thus, HBCUs that value history and heritage must also begin to place more value on African American language. Writing instructors must respect and appreciate African American English and begin to think of creative and consistent ways to teach and discuss African American English in the first-year writing classroom. Without practical applications, the resolution does not fully serve its purpose. Having this much-needed resolution go unimplemented and unsupported is unfortunate for our students.
AAE Statement on Syllabi

I would suggest that first-year writing course syllabi at HBCUs provide a statement addressing AAE and its use in the instructor’s classroom. As a result, first-year writing students at HBCUs will at least have some sense of AAE and an understanding of the instructor and university’s position on AAE in the writing classroom. Also, I recommend that each syllabus should include the SRTOL resolution verbatim and in its entirety on the syllabus. I believe this will help students feel more comfortable about their home language when they first enter that classroom. Students will know that they have this resolution, this policy, which serves as a contract between the instructor and the student, that says that their dialect should be respected in that class by that instructor.

The course syllabus statement could read as follows:

African American English, which is commonly referred to as Ebonics, is defined as: “the variety of English spoken by many African Americans. It reflects the combination of African languages and Euro-American English. It is a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans’ appropriation and transformation of a foreign tongue during slavery” (Redd & Webb 129 and Smitherman 19). AAE has rules, just like any other language. Many African Americans speak this language, especially with their friends and family, and is also known as a “home language” or “home discourse”. I understand this and I respect your home language. Some students may experience slight difficulty as they transition from their “home language” to the “university discourse.” I am here to help you with that. I want to make this transition as comfortable and easy as possible.
The Conference on College Composition and Communication passed a resolution in 1974 entitled “Students’ Right to Their Own Language.” It reads as follows:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language---dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (Conference on College Composition and Communication)

Conclusions

As I discuss AAE, I must shed some light on the different views that exist regarding AAE and code-switching. Rebecca Howard does not agree that students should be forced to code-switch between AAE and SAE. She believes that schools should have a course to teach every race of students about AAE (Howard 278-81). This is an excellent idea for HBCUs as well. If English instructors are not able to thoroughly cover AAE and AART, there could be a required university-wide course, a course similar to freshman experience course that universities would require all students to take.
Also, we cannot continue to avoid the conversation on AAE. I agree with Alim and Smitherman, who write, “We need to … stop apologizing for ‘the way things are’ and [help students] begin …imagining the way things can be… Schooling should not be about convincing students to play the game but … helping them understand how the game’s been rigged, and more importantly, how they can work to change it. Real Talk” (qtd. in “Handlin” 24). Smitherman agrees with Howard and adds, “Nor is bidialectalism the way out – unless you mean bidialectalism for EVERYBODY, an official bi/multilingualism policy for ALL students, not just African Americans, Latinos, and other students of Color. Because if only Black, and other students of Color, must master two varieties of American English, we are back to what (White) linguist Sledd in 1969 called the ‘linguistics of white supremacy’” (“Handlin” 25). Thus, instructors and scholars have various views on code-switching.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I focus on the conclusions and implications that this study brings forth for composition instructors and students at HBCUs. During recent presentations of this research, members in the audience asked: What is the larger goal of this research? What do you hope to achieve with this research? My answer is that I want this research to add to the the limited conversation on teaching first-year writing and addressing African American English at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Also, I want others to be more aware, understanding, and respectful of AAE and other dialects, and especially as students transition to Standard American English. It is difficult for me to understand how many of the African American students who speak AAE degrade their first language or try to forget their home language. This is unfortunate, maybe even more so, for students who attend HBCUs, with their primary purpose being to educate today’s African American students. Other scholars have written about this idea of negotiating two languages. Gilyard writes in his autobiography, “[T]he eradication of one tongue is not prerequisite to the learning of a second” (Voices of the Self 160). Students should know that they can write well and write in Standard American English even if they often use AAE. Arnetha Ball adds: “Students can continue to use their informal language patterns while acquiring competence in new academic registers” (“Cultural Preference” 525). Students who use AAE can successfully use SAE.

In this chapter, I also focus on another aspect of African American English at HBCUs by addressing the need for further study as it relates to analyzing orality in the first-year writing
classroom. African Americans have a rich oral tradition and value their speech acts. However, they hardly ever hear anything positive about the way that they speak. As I was reviewing the first-year writing instructors’ syllabi, I noticed an emphasis on effective oral communication in the composition classroom. I was reminded of a scene from Alice Walker’s novel, *The Color Purple*, where Celie shares her experiences about speaking. Walker writes: “Darlene trying to teach me how to talk…Every time I say something the way I say it, she correct me until I say it some other way. Pretty soon it feel like I can’t think. My mind run up on a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down” (218). Many of today’s African American students may have the same sentiments as Celie when they speak up in class because their writing instructors may not only correct their writing, but may often correct their speech, as well.

The chapter mostly expounds on a few points and issues I have raised in previous chapters. I also reiterate the importance of the Students’ Right to Their Own Language Resolution and a culturally relevant pedagogy for the three HBCUs. I also suggest ways for addressing language diversity in the writing classroom. In general, this chapter answers the following questions: What can composition teacher-scholars do with this research? Why does it matter? What can we take away from this study? I show how my research speaks to the ongoing conversation about African American English in composition classrooms for African American students.

**SRTOL**

Since the Students’ Right to Their Own Language movement began, SRTOL has been the “hot” topic in composition studies; however, after conducting this case study, I wondered: is it just that – a “hot” topic? What are we doing to really make sure that SRTOL is being
implemented? Are writing instructors really respecting their students’ languages? Do writing assignments allow students to display their own language? How are writing instructors responding to students’ language when it appears in papers or classroom discussions? With these questions lingering and with no definitive answers, can we really say that all students have a right to their own language?

I pose these questions because of a paper I received in my English 101 course. Students were assigned an exploratory essay, in which they were to research and discuss both sides of an issue. An African American female student in my class chose to explore why the United States was in Iraq rather than helping with ongoing conflicts in Africa. Because I asked students to be open-minded and consider multiple perspectives, the student wrote something to the effect of--I understand why the U.S. doesn’t want to dip in too much drama. Here, I faced an issue of this student’s own language. I completely grasped what the student meant--she understood why our country did not want to get involved with another country’s affairs and possibly cause more trouble. I knew this from my childhood years when I would often say to “nosey” friends, “You dippin’ and dappin’ and don’t even know what’s happenin’.” So, the phrase simply meant – getting in someone else’s business. But, now I had to address this in a student’s paper. I thought long and hard about what to write in the margin next to her sentence, and I decided to write: I absolutely understand what you mean here, but I’m not sure how this will go over in other academic writing and in other classes. I wanted to make the student aware that I did understand her writing and would not hold her language against her, but she should not expect the same from others instructors.

Even after handing the student’s paper back, I wondered: Did I handle this correctly? Did the student understand? How would other instructors (whether African American or of
different cultures and ethnicities) have responded? I did not know if my attempting to respect my student’s language would hurt her down the road. After all, would her English 102 instructor accept it? Her employer? All these questions allude to my view that SRTOL can sometimes just be a topic of discussion with no clear-cut answers. Also, I am not sure if all instructors know how to handle such situations or if all instructors will actually respect a student’s language. Thus, are we really enacting SRTOL?

The instructors in the case study expressed similar thoughts. They knew that we have this nice resolution in place, but that most instructors are not really enacting it in their classrooms -- mostly because they feel like the students’ language will not be accepted down the line, on an interview or on a job. As Smitherman writes about the struggles of drafting and passing the resolutions, as well as the various reactions to it, she puts forth that when it comes to dialects and language diversity, “Which is not to say that everyone subscribes to these ideas today, just that talk about them is no longer perceived as ‘weird’” (Talkin’ that Talk 389). Although there are different views and attitudes toward students’ language, the least we can do is to have some genuine, consistent conversations with students about their home language. Next, instructors should consider re-thinking our practices and approaches to language, as we think about ways to incorporate these approaches into assignments that our students can value and use. Peter Elbow writes about the significance of offering students the “invitation to experiment”. Elbow explains:

That is, we need to invite, not demand or even pressure; and our invitation should be to experiment--try out options, not settle on a single approach. We need to recognize and respect (and talk about) the various reasons why vernacular speaking students might not want even to try out a vernacular “home” dialect in writing--particularly if it is stigmatized. Some may not want to use a home
dialect for any classroom task; some may not want to use it for those academic rhetorical tasks that they experience as impersonal, abstract, square, or clunky—alien to home rhetorical traditions; and some may not want to use it because they want to develop fluency in producing SWE—and therefore be willing to pay a price of reduced comfort, fluency, and power at the stage of putting words on the page; and finally, some may feel that they have too few allies in the class and so will need to use vernacular dialect only for private writing (if at all). A few may actually disapprove of their vernacular—just as Jesse Jackson\textsuperscript{15} called Ebonics “trash talk.” Nevertheless I maintain that we should make this invitation to experiment. ("Vernacular Englishes" 129)

I agree with Elbow’s concept of the “invitation”. As Elbow points out, there is no one way, no one approach. We have to try different methods for teaching and discussing language diversity in our classrooms. In addition, Elbow addresses the need to talk about dialects, from various perspectives, as well as the stigmas. Students do need as many allies as possible, which include instructors and classmates to make sure that they will feel safe and comfortable. And there are those, like Tuskegee University student Shayla, who are not on board with AAE and feel like college students should be beyond AAE when she stated, “By this time, we are in college; we should be able to know how to pronounce our words and be able to spell our words by now instead of taking shortcuts” (Steele). I believe the classroom is the perfect place to talk out this “spaghetti junction” of feelings, emotions, and viewpoints surrounding AAE. If not in the classroom, where else might students get to have these conversations?

\textsuperscript{15} During the 1996 Oakland Ebonics debate, Rev. Jesse Jackson, a political figure and prominent leader in the African American community, publicly denounced AAE.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

For years, scholars and researchers have tried to make stronger ties between students’ home life and academic experiences. A culturally relevant pedagogy is important for African American students. Through culturally relevant teaching, students learn more about themselves and their heritage and culture. A culturally relevant pedagogy leaves students feeling empowered as they become intellectually and culturally competent. Because of the environment and historical perspective, an HBCU is the perfect place to enact a culturally relevant pedagogy.

At the majority of these three HBCUs included in this case study, students were permitted to write about or make connections to experiences from their own lives. Also, the instructors in this study valued using African American texts in the writing classroom. At Stillman College, Malcolm and Kelvin both wrote about James Baldwin’s short story, “Sonny’s Blues”. As African American male students, these two really focused on the addressing the various aspects of true brotherhood and what that means. Malcolm chose to begin his essay by focusing on the issues with brotherhood that his best friend was experiencing due to being away at college and away from his younger brother. Malcolm stressed the significance of family and home. Tuskegee University student Shayla writes about “Brownies” by African American author ZZ Packer and addresses racism and racial profiling in her essay. She also discussed some very common and hurtful stereotypes pertaining to African Americans, from the type of food African Americans are said to eat to the music that they enjoy. Shayla also raises some tough questions about images of African Americans in the media and the issue of skin color in the African American community—light skinned versus dark skinned Blacks. She uses her essay to deconstruct negative stereotypes and images of African Americans. Both Tougaloo students wrote essays about their family; Jared wrote to his dad to share his experiences as a
Tougaloo College student, and Nyesha wrote about the hurt and family betrayal after her mother’s death. Each student’s essay included features of African American English and/or the African American rhetorical tradition. These students had the privilege of being able to write about their experiences and connect with the topics and texts culturally. The African American experience is valuable in the first-year writing classroom.

During an interview about culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings’ discussed the importance of allowing “the students to be who they are…” (Willis and Lewis 62). One of the goals of my study, as well, is to address how language is so closely tied to one’s identity. In terms of dialect and language, Billings said that instructors should help students “understand where the language is appropriate and how it translates” (Willis and Lewis 62). By helping students understand more about their language, students began to appreciate their language and how it works. The key is that instructors have to help the students discuss and understand African American English and translate when necessary. I value Ladson-Billings’ advice for instructors on how to make their pedagogy more culturally relevant. She tells instructors not to attempt to change their entire curriculum all at once; instead, she advises instructors to ask themselves, “What is the thing that I’m going to focus on? Where am I going to begin to improve?” (Willis and Lewis 68). With this approach, instructors should not feel overwhelmed about creating a culturally relevant pedagogy for the first-year writing course.

Orality at HBCUs

In 1986, a popular rap group by the name of Run DMC covered Areosmith’s 1975 song in which they tell the story of an inexperienced high school boy who takes advice from a sassy, more experienced female who tells the guy, as the song’s chorus says —to walk this way, talk
In many ways, today’s composition instructors are singing the same tune and telling their students who are African American English speakers to “talk this way” in reference to Standard American English.

Oral-based discourse is often rejected in the writing classroom. African American students often come to HBCUs eager to learn and ready to succeed. However, once enrolled at the university, they soon realize that their communication (both oral and written) is under attack. Not only are African American English (AAE) and features of the African American Rhetorical Tradition shunned in “formal”/“academic” papers, but some writing instructors are continuing to place restrictions on African American students’ speaking and verbal communication in the public classroom setting. African American students are expected to consistently write *and* speak in Standard American English (SAE).

Some instructors not only focus on the writing but also on the students’ speech. Redd provides the following scenario from Mary Hall’s class where, “…even though she understands what Jamal [her student] is saying, she interrupts to correct him if he says, for instance, ‘the boy know’ while speaking in class or reading aloud” (Redd and Webb 76). Ms. Hall is an example of a teacher who subscribes to the theory that some teachers follow who believe that “You can’t write right if you don’t talk right’” (Redd and Webb 60). This statement is a generalization that assumes students will automatically write the way that they speak. However, for many students, especially those who successfully code-switch, this is certainly not always the case.

The following questions related to orality were raised as I carried out this study. Should writing instructors concern themselves with speech or just focus on writing? Should we correct students’ speech when they speak African American English in our writing classroom? Will doing so cause students to “shut down” or not want to participate in class discussions? How
does restricting first-year writing students’ verbal communication to SAE in the public classroom setting at an HBCU impact students’ identity? Or, should writing instructors only model correct speech for the students? I did not expect to go down this path with my research, but I will share some of what I found interesting related to this topic. I believe examining orality in first-year writing classes at HBCUs, especially in terms of how writing instructors assess oral proficiency of SAE in class deserves further study.

As more composition instructors focus on speech practices in the form of class discussions, oral presentations, and oral reflections, students become apprehensive as they have to re-think their speech performances and oral patterns because many students feel that they “don’t talk right.” I would like for this research to also help composition instructors begin to appreciate the voices of AAE speaking students at HBCUs. I reviewed each syllabus to look at the instructor’s view on orality in the classroom.

Dr. Tanner’s syllabus does not have a statement about orality. However, during his interview with me, Dr. Tanner stated that he uses African American English “at any moment” to communicate with his students. He mentioned that he might be discussing a reading from the anthology and then pose a question to his students, and a student may respond, speaking AAE. He stated, “I don’t shut that person’s manner in talking down. I contribute by also providing African American English so that way other people can get involved” (Tanner). Because the students are allowed to speak using AAE and even have the instructor join in, these students may feel more comfortable about speaking up in the classroom.

Dr. Winston’s syllabus includes a recitation, which requires the students to “…choose one of president Obama’s speeches to memorize and recite to the class. You will also be asked to analyze various aspects of the speech before your recitation” (Winston, “English 102 Policy
Statement”). It seems that the rationale for having students to recite one of Obama’s speeches is to give students practice with speaking correctly and to model their own speech patterns after someone who speaks correctly. Then, the students must also take a final exam that focuses on aspects of orality. The syllabus reads as follows: “The final exam will cover grammar, punctuation, and diction problems that have occurred frequently in student papers during the semester” (Winston, “English 102 Policy Statement”). Because these students will be graded on their diction, they may have certain reservations about the way that they speak, particularly how they choose their words and enunciate.

Dr. Tingle’s syllabus states that one of his goals is “To improve communication skills, both oral and written” (Tingle, “English 101 – Effective Writing”). One of the assessment methods reads as follows: “Assessment: Use Standard English in class, both written and spoken: Tougaloo’s students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the use of Standard English in class, written and spoken” (Tingle, “English 101 – Effective Writing”). The syllabus clearly focuses on oral communication, as well as written communication. With this connection between the written and the spoken on the syllabus, students’ line of thinking that they can’t talk right so they can write right is likely encouraged. Also, when students are assessed on being able to consistently speak Standard American English in class, I believe this could cause great students who have excellent ideas, but speak African American English, to not participate much in class.

The connection to speaking correctly could certainly tie into the institutions’ mission statements about effective written and oral communication, but also the focus on preparing students for a job and for a career that also surfaces in the mission statements. The three HBCU instructors all discussed the importance of preparing their students for the “outside world” and
the “real world”. So, the focus on speaking SAE is likely to give students more experience and practice with speaking correctly in order that the students might do so on a job.

The information I have gathered is preliminary; thus, orality in the first-year writing classroom certainly requires further study. Further research will help discover whether students feel reluctant to speak up because of their instructors’ emphasis on oral communication and whether the students’ identity is affected.

**Implications for HBCUs**

In this section, I provide the important “takeaways” that HBCU administrators and HBCU English instructors should find useful. I will focus on two here.

(1) Most African Americans speak African American English; however, HBCU students seem to have an unclear and/or negative perception of AAE. The majority of the students interviewed did not have an accurate definition or perception of AAE. First-year writing instructors can help change this negative perception into a positive one. From my own experiences growing up, I knew I “talked Black” or talked like most Black people talked. But, I did not know that the way I talked had a name, let alone rules. It would have been great to know this important information about my language and culture—I know I would have appreciated it more. I assumed that an HBCU, given its history and context, would be the one place that African American students can really learn about and appreciate AAE. Students need to be knowledgeable about the way they speak. My mom and dad often criticized the way I spoke as an undergrad and even now. I cannot remember how many times I have heard my dad (who frequently uses AAE) say “What kinda way you talking? You ‘pose to be an English major?” I was relieved when I became
equipped – when I was able to tell him about AAE and its rules and defend it. Do our students have that knowledge and the ability to defend? I am not sure that they do. It may prove helpful for HBCU instructors to spend more time in the classroom on discussing AAE and helping students understand it.

(2) All English instructors can do more to bring the SRTOL resolution to fruition. In many ways, we have a resolution on paper that many instructors do nothing with. We have to start somewhere, and in this case, a small step is a big step. This resolution is the key to students’ identity and acceptance. Students should be aware of SRTOL, and that is why I suggest placing it on each composition syllabus.

A practical application is to include assignments where students can use their home language as well as the university discourse. For example, a writing instructor might ask first-year writing students to write about their college experiences, or to describe the campus or what college classes are like. The instructor might ask the student to write one version of this assignment as a letter/paper to a friend or family member at home; then, the student can write the same assignment but for an academic audience. After this assignment, the instructor should set aside some time for students to openly dialogue about dialects and home language. The students should be asked to point out differences between the two papers and discuss why they made certain decisions about language choice. With an assignment like this one, students become more aware of their home language and the value of their home language as well as the university discourse.
The Need for HBCUs

There are scholars who believe that we live in a “post-racial” society and that since we are beyond segregation, there is no longer a need for black colleges. The HBCU was founded to educate African American students when Blacks could not receive an education at the same institutions as whites. Now, since African Americans can attend any college or university that they choose, many wonder why HBCUs still exist. There is a common saying among HBCU alumni that states that “Every Black student needs the HBCU experience.” However, some believe that the need for the HBCU has passed and that the HBCU is past its prime. In Jamal Calloway’s article, “The Black College is Dead,” he shares these primary concerns about HBCUs: (1) low graduation rates, (2) poor alumni support, (3) lack of financial support, (4) overworked faculty members, and (5) low retention rates. For example, because of these concerns—but mainly for financial reasons, state legislatures have been consistently attempting to merge Mississippi’s three public HBCUs (Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, Jackson State University in Jackson, and Alcorn State in Lorman) into one school. Of course, African Americans across the state of Mississippi and especially the alumni of these three universities were outraged and protested, and the merge has not happened yet. In addition to these concerns that Calloway points out, many wonder: If African Americans fought to have the right to integrate, why voluntarily segregate?

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) responds as follows:

While the 105 HBCUs represent just three percent of the nation’s institutions of higher learning, they graduate nearly 20 percent of African Americans who earn undergraduate degrees. … HBCUs are experts at educating African Americans:

-HBCUs graduate over 50 percent African American professionals.
-HBCUs graduate over 50 percent of African American public school teachers and 70 percent of African American dentists.

-50 percent of African Americans who graduate from HBCUs go on to graduate or professional schools.

-HBCUs award more than one in three of the degrees held by African Americans in natural sciences.

-HBCUs award one-third of the degrees held by African Americans in mathematics. ("UNCF")

Known for its slogan, “The mind is a terrible thing to waste,” the UNCF touts the significance of HBCUs for African American students. Roy Beasley, the editor and manager of the Gateway to HBCUs website, writes, “Possessing an extensive roster of career role models, HBCUs can also provide African American students with another important advantage: the academic freedom they need in order to work out their personal strategies for coping with the demeaning and distracting racism that still pervades American society”. The concept is beneficial for many African American students. From my own experience, I knew that I would attend an HBCU because I wanted to have a space and some time to “figure some things out” about college and about the world, among a group of people who looked like me, before I moved on to the big, predominantly white universities of Kansas State University and the University of Alabama.

I think my research answers this question of why we need HBCUs, as well. African American students need a place where they can get the special attention their language needs, while solidifying their identity. African American students need a place where students can figure out who they are first. African American students need the space, the context, the environment to figure things out and to learn about their history and culture.
Implications for Non-HBCUs/PWIs

Though this case study only examined students, instructors, and writing at HBCUs, this research is relevant for students who are not African American, students who do not attend an HBCU, and for English instructors at non-HBCUs. Every student enters the university with a home language or dialect. Whether students speak African American English or Southern American English or other kinds of regional or cultural dialects, writing instructors can work towards helping students transition from their home language to the university discourse by creating a safe space, a discourse community if you will, where conversations about multiple Englishes can occur.

Also, every institution has a mission statement, and that mission statement should be apparent in the writing classroom. This project helps every institution and every writing instructor think more carefully about how that institution’s mission statement can be implemented. As a result, this study can help improve assessment at institutions. Though this study is grounded in a specific context, it applies far beyond it.

Issues of Resistance

I examine and explain possible difficulties students and instructors may face when engaging AAE and how these issues can be handled. I understand that there may be unexpected obstacles and resistance, which are normal, but I hope that instructors will not allow these potential difficult cases to provide a negative slant on such a positive pedagogical approach for grappling with language diversity.

Initially, some students may express discontent or resistance to AAE because they are unfamiliar with AAE, or if familiar with it, they have been taught to avoid it in academia.
Moreover, Redd reports that she has offered students the opportunity to use these elements in their writing, along with African American English (AAE), and many refuse to do so, as if they are afraid or see little value in their own rhetorical and language traditions. To resolve this issue, instructors must help students realize the history, beauty, and legitimacy of their language. Also, instructors must really utilize the models as ways to show students that the African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition can be used successfully. Widely recognized composition scholars, such as Keith Gilyard, Adam Banks, Elaine Richardson, and Geneva Smitherman, have all used AAE and features of the African American rhetorical tradition in their published writing to great effect.

In addition, instructors of all races at HBCUs must be open to acquiring more knowledge to better assist students\(^{16}\). It is important that instructors know how to improve African American students’ writing and voice without changing their ideas. Patricia Hill Collins argues that “oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of the dominant groups” (qtd. in Comfort 99). Instructors must understand the basics of African American English in order not to degrade students’ ideas and language and ultimately, force students to conform to “raceless” writing.

**Implications for Further Study**

There are areas that this study does not address, so it certainly can be replicated and expanded. The researcher could make this study more of a longitudinal study by focusing on

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\(^{16}\) We must keep in mind that not all instructors at HBCUs are African American and that all instructors need the sufficient background knowledge and training, regardless of race.
more students at more universities over a full sequence of English 101 and 102. This case study focused on a few participants at three sites during one semester. Two of the three courses were the second half of the course, which seemed to focus more on literature and research. The study could be expanded to include collecting more than one essay from the students and also possibly following the students through all the stages of the writing process for each assignment. Classroom observations might also prove beneficial in order to see actual classroom practices and interactions.

The researcher could also look into the role that the race of the instructor plays. The African American instructor in this study shared how he allows students to speak in class using AAE and even uses it himself. The students at Tougaloo, who had a white instructor, alluded to the issues that race presents in the classroom when it comes to language diversity. The two Tougaloo students mentioned that the person reading their papers has to be able to understand what they are saying. When asked about using AAE in her papers, Nyesha mentioned, “‘Cause like if it’s a African American professor, they’ll be used to it and they’ll understand the paper more than a white professor would. ‘Cause a white professor would be like ‘huh’; they might not understand it” (Peyton). Dr. Tingle mentioned during his interview that he is “a white guy teaching in a room with mostly black students” and that he wants “to make sure that everything’s comfortable between them and me.” Thus, it would be interesting to explore how the comfort level varies when discussing language diversity and dialects when HBCU students have an African American instructor versus a Caucasian instructor. In fact, across HBCU campuses, this is becoming a common trend; many of the instructors at HBCUs are not African Americans. These questions then surface for some skeptics: Can non-African American instructors feel connected to the African American students? Can they help those students appreciate their
culture and identity? Can they help these students learn about their language and African American English?

**Contribution to the Field**

This research is important to me because of the education I received at a historically Black college and how that education made a difference in my life. Because the research on writing instruction at HBCUs was limited, I set out to add to that conversation. This research demonstrates a need for HBCUs to assist African American students in acquiring a better definition and understanding and appreciation of the language that most African Americans speak. And, in doing so, these students should have a more positive outlook of their home language. This research encourages the instructor to take the next step to push the SRTOL beyond the printed page and into the classroom. This research adds to the conversation of “what’s really goin’ on” at HBCUs today.

This research is also important because in many ways the great work being done at HBCUs has been overlooked. We cannot take for granted the history and context of each HBCU. I am grateful for my HBCU experience, and I have a vested interest in their success and the future of HBCUs. I hope this project makes a difference, now or down the line, for HBCU students and instructors.

I hope that this research accurately represents African American student voices. Jacqueline Jones Royster recognizes the issues encountered “when the first voice you hear is not your own.” Royster explains, “Seemingly, we have been forever content to let voices other than our own speak authoritatively about our areas of expertise and about us. It is time to speak for ourselves, in our own interests, in the interest of our work, and in the interest of our students”
(39). With a better understanding of African American language, scholars can make critical decisions that will positively affect students and what is considered “standard” at universities.

I hope that my research reveals relevant data that will help to create a space for conversations for instructors of African American students at HBCUs, and PWIs as well, about how to help students understand and appreciate their home language while aiding them in transitioning into the discourse of the academy.
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Hello,

I hope you are doing well. I am Kedra James, a doctoral candidate in English, specializing in composition and rhetoric, at the University of Alabama. I am currently working on my dissertation, which explores first-year writing programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I am quite interested in working with [insert institution’s name] as one of my sites for research.

My dissertation addresses the mission of HBCUs and how that mission is reflected in their first-year writing courses. Also, this study examines writing pedagogy at HBCUs, especially in terms of how teachers and students deal with features of African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition in their writing assignments. Some of the primary questions for this study are: What is the subject matter and curriculum for first-year writing at HBCUs? Are the mission statements of HBCUs reflected in their first-year writing program? How do first-year writing students and teachers handle African American English at HBCUs?

In order to complete the study, I will need to obtain a copy of the course syllabus and a prompt for a writing assignment and interview instructors who are teaching a first-year writing course during the Spring 2012 semester. If you meet this criterion and are willing to provide a copy of your first-year writing course syllabus and a writing prompt and take part in a confidential interview, please respond to this email to let me know whether or not you are interested in participating in the study. The interview will be set up at your convenience and will take no more than 15-20 minutes of your time. I will also seek consent from first-year writing students at [insert institution’s name] to review an essay written for that course. All participants in the study will be compensated for their time.
Your participation will not only aid in the success of my study but, will also provide valuable insight to the topic of pedagogies for teaching first-year composition at HBCUs.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Best,
Kedra

Kedra L. James
Graduate Council Fellow
English Department
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Dear Student,

I hope you are doing well. I recently visited your freshman composition class to present information on my research study and to go over the Information Participant Sheet with you. I am writing to inform you that you were randomly selected to participate in the study, “First-year Writing Programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities”.

If you are still interested in participating in this study, you will need to complete the following two steps.

(1) Submit a copy of your first major paper assignment for your first-year writing course as an attachment to me via email at kljames1@crimson.ua.edu on the same day that it is due to your course instructor.

(2) Approximately three weeks after you have submitted your first major paper assignment, take part in a 15-minute follow-up interview with me in an empty classroom in the department, [specific campus classroom number and location to be inserted here]. I would like to audiotape the interview to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. However, if you do not want to be taped, simply tell me, and I will take handwritten notes.

You can refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time. If you agree to participate and then later decide not to, you will be removed from the study and another student will be randomly chosen to participate.
Participants in the study will be compensated for their time. In appreciation of your time and participation, you will receive a Visa gift card.

I ask that you please reply to this email as soon as possible to let me know whether or not you are still interested in participating in this study. Thank you!

Best,

Kedra James

Kedra L. James
Graduate Council Fellow
English Department
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
APPENDIX C

Student Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in studying how composition teachers and students deal with African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition at HBCUs and how those two can help students successfully use Standard American English. Also, I am interested in studying how African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition can help HBCU students appreciate their culture’s history and journey to literacy.

I would like to audiotape the interview to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. However, if you do not want to be taped, simply tell me, and I will then take handwritten notes.

If the following questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing – on any of the questions or refusing to continue with the interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

1. As a student enrolled in a first-year writing course, what do you have the most trouble with when writing?
2. How would you define African American English, which is commonly referred to as Ebonics?
3. Do you use African American English or Ebonics in your speech? Explain.
4. Does your first-year writing instructor teach, cover, or discuss African American English in class in any way? Please explain.
5. Are you interested in learning more about the history and rules of African American English? If so, why?
6. Do you use African American English in your papers for class? Why or why not?
7. Do you think it’s possible to successfully use Ebonics in a paper for class? Explain.
8. When you write papers for your freshman writing class, do you feel like you are maintaining your own voice and identity or do you feel like you are writing just to please the instructor and get a good grade? Explain.
9. What are your thoughts on the first major essay that you submitted to your instructor?
   NOTE to IRB Reviewers: After the student participant submits the essay to the researcher to be analyzed, the researcher will need to ask a few specific questions about the student’s essay. These questions won’t be known and can’t be listed on this interview protocol until the essay is received from the student.
10. What other comments would you like to provide related to the topic of this study?

Closing
Now that we are done, do you have any questions you’d like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, my contact information is:

Phone: 601-209-1264
Email: kljames1@crimson.ua.edu

Also, I may need to contact you later via email if clarification is needed. Is that okay?
APPENDIX D

Instructor Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in studying how composition teachers and students engage African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition at HBCUs and how those two can help students successfully use Standard American English. Also, I am interested in studying how African American English and the African American rhetorical tradition can help HBCU students appreciate their culture’s history and journey to literacy.

I would like to audiotape the interview to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. However, if you do not want to be taped, simply tell me, and I will then take handwritten notes.

If the following questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing – on any of the questions or refusing to continue with the interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

1. How long have you taught college English?

2. What do you view the role of a first-year writing course at an HBCU to be?

3. How would you describe the subject matter and curriculum for the first-year writing course that you teach?

4. Do you think the first-year writing curriculum at [insert institution’s name] should align with and reflect [insert institution]’s mission statement? If so, how?

5. What do you think your first-year writing students have the most trouble with when writing?

6. Do you teach or cover African American English or the African American rhetorical tradition in your first-year writing course? If so, explain why and how?

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7. Do you view students’ use of African American English in writing as an “error”? Please explain.

8. If a student used African American English in his/her essay that was submitted to you, how would you address or grade the instance of African American English?

9. Do you think African American English can be successfully used in writing in the “real world” (i.e. in publications, on a job, or to conduct business)? Please explain.

10. Do you think African American English can be used to help students better understand how to use Standard American English in writing? Please explain.

11. Do you use texts by African Americans in the writing classroom? If so, what are some of those texts? What is your rationale for using texts by African American authors?

12. I will read aloud the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s 1974 “Students’ Right to their Own Language Resolution”. [This resolution is on the following page.] Do you think this resolution is being fulfilled today? Explain.

13. What other comments would you like to provide related to the topic of this study?

Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you’d like to ask me about this research project? If you want to contact me later, my contact information is:

Phone: 601-209-1264

Email: kljames1@crimson.ua.edu

Also, I may need to contact you later via email if clarification is needed. Is that okay?
We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.
APPENDIX F

Stillman College Mission Statement

Stillman is a liberal arts institution, committed to fostering academic excellence and to providing high quality educational opportunities for diverse populations with disparate levels of academic preparation. Primarily a teaching institution, Stillman has a proud and evolving tradition of preparing students for leadership and service in society.

Stillman has a historical and covenantal affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whose Reformed tradition and commitment to the cultivation of the mind correspond well with the mission of the College. The College, via its constituents, is committed to service for the common good. The entire academic enterprise, under girded with the principles of faith and ethical integrity, manifests constructive compassion as it confidently pursues the best in scholarly inquiry and creative endeavors.

The College’s purpose is to provide a student-centered, fulfilling, technologically enriched educational experience that will among other outcomes, produce
graduates who will:

• Think carefully and logically about and express with clarity their observations, experiences, and findings concerning the world they live in via written and spoken forms;

• Exhibit competence in their disciplines, character in their work with others, and compassion toward all people consistent with an education in a Christian environment;

• Qualify for admission to and success in graduate and professional schools or for entry into selected careers;

• Manifest the ability to do independent research, demonstrate objective Scholarship, and exhibit creative production/performance appropriate to their disciplines.
Tuskegee University Mission Statement

Tuskegee University is a national, independent, and state-related institution of higher learning that is located in the State of Alabama. The University has distinctive strengths in the sciences, architecture, business, engineering, health, and other professions, all structured on solid foundations in the liberal arts. In addition, the University's programs focus on nurturing the development of high-order intellectual and moral qualities among students and stress the connection between education and the highly trained leadership Americans need in general, especially for the work force of the 21st Century and beyond. The results we seek are students whose technical, scientific, and professional prowess has been not only rigorously honed, but also sensitively oriented in ways that produce public-spirited graduates who are both competent and morally committed to public service with integrity and excellence.

The University is rooted in a history of successfully educating African Americans to understand themselves and their society against the background of their total cultural heritage and the promise of their individual and collective future. The most important of the people we serve are our students. Our overall purpose is to nurture and challenge them to grow to their fullest potential. Serving their needs is the principal reason for our existence. A major outcome we seek is to prepare them to play effective professional and leadership roles in society and to become productive citizens in the national and world community. Tuskegee University continues to be dedicated to these broad aims.

Over the past century, various social and historical changes have transformed this institution into a comprehensive and diverse place of learning whose fundamental purpose is to develop leadership, knowledge, and service for a global society. Committed deeply to academic excellence, the University admits highly talented students of character and challenges them to reach their highest potential. The University also believes strongly in equality of opportunity and recognizes that exquisite talent is often hidden in students whose finest development requires unusual educational, personal, and financial reinforcement. The University actively invites a diversity of talented students, staff, and faculty from all racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds to participate in this educational enterprise.

SPECIAL ELEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY’S MISSION

Instruction:

- We focus on education as a continuing process and lifelong endeavor for all people.
- We provide a high quality core experience in the liberal arts.
• We develop superior technical, scientific, and professional education with a career orientation.
• We stress the relationship between education and employment, between what students learn and the changing needs of a global workforce.

Research:
• We preserve, refine, and develop further the bodies of knowledge already discovered.
• We discover new knowledge for the continued growth of individuals and society and for the enrichment of the University's instructional and service programs.
• We develop applications of knowledge to help resolve problems of modern society.

Service:
• We serve the global society as well as the regional and campus community and beyond through the development of outreach programs that are compatible with the University's educational mission, that improve understanding of community problems, and that help develop relevant alternative solutions.
• We engage in outreach activities to assist in the development of communities as learning societies.

LAND GRANT MISSION

The above three elements of mission, together with certain acts of the United States Congress and the State of Alabama, define Tuskegee University as a land grant institution. Originally focused primarily on agriculture, the University's land-grant function is currently a generic one that embraces a wide spectrum of liberal arts, scientific, and technical and professional programs.

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

A strong liberal arts program with a core curriculum is provided for all undergraduate students, enabling them to prepare for the mastery of humanities, sciences, technical and professional areas.

The more specific aims of the undergraduate program are to:
• Present the process of education as a lifelong experience;
• Insure that students have a strong grasp of language usage-written and oral, mathematical as well as literary;
• Deepen students' knowledge of history and the cultural heritage;
• Develop students' sense of civic and socially responsible use of time and of knowledge;
• Understand and appreciate the importance of moral and spiritual values to enable students to not only pursue careers but to lead lives that are personally satisfying and socially responsible; and
• Equip students with strong research interests and skills and deep commitments to the professions.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

The University provides graduate level instruction as well as research and training in post baccalaureate professional fields. These programs seek to develop in students the ability to engage in independent and scholarly inquiry, a mastery of certain professional disciplines, and a capacity to make original contributions to various bodies of knowledge. Graduate degrees are offered only in selected fields of unusual University strength and opportunity.

SUMMARY

Tuskegee University accomplishes its central purpose of developing leadership, knowledge and service through its undergraduate, graduate, professional, research and outreach programs. Through these programs, students are encouraged not only to pursue careers but to be of service to society and to remain active lifetime learners. The University seeks to instill a robust thirst for knowledge and a vibrant quest for wholesale patterns of personal and social ethics that have philosophical and spiritual depth. In the process, it seeks to help each student develop an appreciation for the finer traits of human personality, the beauty of the earth and the universe, and a personal commitment to the improvement of the human condition.
APPENDIX H

Tougaloo College Mission Statement

Vision Statement
Tougaloo College is an enduring and nurturing community that values life long learning. Our trademarks are academic excellence and social commitment. We prepare our students to produce the "next new idea" and to become the servant-leaders that will effect order and change in a global society by incorporating new technologies, practices and knowledge into our teaching, service and research.

Mission Statement and Purpose
Tougaloo College is a private, historically black, liberal arts institution, accessible to all persons regardless of race, ethnic origin, religion or creed. The College prepares students to be imaginative, self-directed, lifelong learners and mindful thinkers, committed to leadership and services in a global society by offering a high quality liberal studies program.

Founded in 1869 by the American Missionary Association, Tougaloo College was chartered on the principles that it "be accessible to all irrespective of their religious tenets, and conducted on the most liberal principles for the benefit of our citizens in general."

Tougaloo acknowledges and respects its traditions, remains dedicated to the equality of all people, and continues to be a value-oriented community where students are guided by a concerned faculty and staff.

The members of this community apply current knowledge to prepare students for lifelong learning related to new information and emerging technologies, as well as humane standards in a global society.

Tougaloo offers an undergraduate curriculum designed to encourage students to apply critical thought to all areas of life, to acquire a basic knowledge of the humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences, to develop skills required in selected professions; and to provide leadership in a democratic society and in a changing world.

Tougaloo intends that its students become self-directed learners and self-reliant persons capable of dealing with people, challenges and issues. Tougaloo College intends to contribute to the social, health, and educational needs of the local and state communities through a program of community service.
APPENDIX I

Dr. Tanner’s Syllabus

Course Description: This course focuses on the reinforcement of skills in the areas noted for ENG 131 and requires the writing of one’s perspective via a documented, argumentative research paper and a couple of analyses of a poem, short story, or essay. Prerequisite: ENG 131. (In other words, if you received an “NC” in ENG 131 last semester, then you should not be in this course.) This course satisfies the general education requirement.

Course Objectives:

- Read, analyze, and compose various forms of writing: argumentation, analysis, and research.
- Complete various short assignments to initiate students’ analytical skills to reading/writing tasks.
- Plan and organize strategies appropriate to the writing tasks.
- Choose words, grammatical constructions, and writing conventions according to Standard English usage and/or appropriate to the purpose of the composition.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Compose various essays/papers that illustrate the varying levels of written competence
- Utilize research techniques for developing an argument
- Apply analytical skills to multiple genres of English (i.e., fiction and poetry)
- Create reader-responses to the literature covered in the course
- Demonstrate critical thinking approaches to scholarly, published, and student-created literature (via the written activities/assignments)

Course Units / Unit Overview:

Unit 1: Fictional Experience

Objectives: the students are expected to learn the following:

- plan and compose an effective analytical paper dealing with comparing and contrasting fiction (short stories)
- analyze thematic and literary devices involved with short stories
- compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and/or personal connection students may have with short stories
- identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
• utilize and navigate Blackboard 9
• examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
• recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
• apply MLA documentation style guide

Unit 2: Poetic Experience
Objectives: The students are expected to learn the following:

• plan and compose an effective analytical paper dealing with comparing and contrasting of poetry and its respective subjects / topics
• analyze thematic and literary devices involved with poetry
• compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and / or personal connection students may have with poetry
• identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
• utilize and navigate Blackboard 9
• examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
• recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
• apply MLA documentation style guide

Mid-Semester Unit (1 Week)

Week 8 – MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS WEEK (10/10 – 10/14)

Unit 3: MLA, Research, and Argumentation
Objectives: The students are expected to learn the following:

• plan and compose an effective argumentative research paper dealing with fiction or poetry and its respective subjects / topics
• compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and / or personal connection students may have with argumentation, research, and/or literary genres
• identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
• utilize and navigate Blackboard
• examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
• recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
• apply MLA documentation style guide

Final Unit (1 Week)
Week 17 – FINAL EXAMINATIONS WEEK

Methods of evaluation: Grades will be based on the following course components:

- 15% - Journal Entries
- 20% - Comparison and Contrast Analysis Essay (includes Introductory Paragraph Assignment)
- 5% - Mid-term exam
- 20% - Comparison and Contrast Analysis Essay 2 (includes Introductory Paragraph Assignment)
- 30% - Argumentative Research Essay (includes Introductory Paragraph Assignment)
- 10% - Final Exam

The student must complete and submit all these assigned at the time specified in order to potentially receive a passing grade in the course. A grade of C or better is required in all freshman English courses and is a prerequisite for advancement to another English course at Stillman. A grade below a C is an NC (No Credit):

A (4.00) = 100 – 90
B (3.00) = 89 – 80
C (2.00) = 79 – 70
NC (1.00 – 0.00) = 69 – 0

A grade of “NC” (No Credit) may be assigned when a student has completed all the major assignments and has attended class regularly but does not have a “C” average. A “No Credit” will not affect your academic record, but you will have to repeat the course.

Individual major assignments are subject to receive plus (+) and minus (-) letter grades:

A+ = 4.33  A = 4.00  A- = 3.67
Class attendance policy: Preparing for class and attending class regularly are primary components in completing a course successfully. The Stillman College Catalog contains the entire class attendance policy. The parts of the policy dealing with unexcused absences, excused absences, and presenting excuses are as follows:

Unexcused Absences – Unexcused absences exceeding the number of credit hours for a course can automatically suspend a student from a course. [For a MWF class, excessive absences amount to four; for T/Th classes, three.] Double absences may be charged for unexcused absences that occur on the day before or following a holiday. When a student is suspended from a class for excessive absences, he/she may be reinstated by the Vice President for Student Affairs after a conference or counseling session with designated college staff.

Excused Absences – Students may obtain an official excuse by presenting the appropriate documentation to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The excuse must be endorsed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs before it becomes official. Officially excused absences are permissible so long as such absences do not destroy the ability of a student to master course requirements.

Presenting Excuses – Official excuses must be presented by the student to the concerned instructor within 7 days of the student’s return to class. The presentation of a timely excuse shall entitle the student to an opportunity to perform all class assignments missed. Seven additional days, following the return to class, shall be allowed for student (and the instructor) to execute make-up work.

The college catalog also specifies that frequent tardies (3 or more) by students and early departures may lead to the assignment of an unexcused absence. If you arrive to class after roll has been checked, you are responsible for notifying the instructor that the notation of "absent" should be changed to "tardy." You are responsible for keeping up with your absences regardless of how you accumulate them.

If you are participating in any activity that will make you absent the day work is due, you must turn in the work prior to your departure! Also, remind your coach(es) or activities director(s) to submit up-to-date events via Bulletin Board (Webmail).

Paper Format: All major and minor typed assignments are to be DOUBLE SPACED; you should use font size twelve (12) and TIMES NEW ROMAN. In the upper left hand corner of
your typed documents, you should include the following information in the order I have provided to you:

Your name
My name
Class number and letter section
Due date of assignment

In the center alignment format, you should include the title of the typed document (i.e., Essay #3, Homework Assignment on Alice Walker’s Short Story, or any creative title). Please note that titles should not be italicized or underlined (unless you have included the title of a book in your creative title). You are not to put the title in bold font. You should not place the title in quotation marks (unless the title is a quoted expression). Also, you are not to increase the font size of the title. All essays should have an INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH, a BODY SECTION, and a CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH. Essays should not have any text messaging language such as “u” for “you,” “b” for “be,” “2” for “to/too,” “&” for “and,” etc. Minor typed assignments that you complete but do not follow the instructions of the assignment prompts may be marked “incomplete / F.”

File Saving Options: Microsoft Word Document is the primary word processor preferred for this course. However, if you are using any other kind of word processor (WordPad, Text Edit, Microsoft Works Word Processor) to type your assignments, please change the “File type” when you “Save” your document to your files. For example, after you have selected “File Save As,” simply type the name of the file and simply click on the drop box below the file-name-box to select “MS Word,” “Rich Text Format” (rtf.), or “Word.” It is important that you select some kind of Microsoft Word version or a “Rich Text Format” file type in order to submit your assignments successfully on Blackboard. Also AVOID INCLUDING THE NUMBER SYMBOL IN YOUR FILE NAME (i.e., Journal Entry #1). Try to use a file name that does not use the number symbol (i.e., Journal Entry No. 1).

Major and Minor Assignment Policy: Major graded work (such as papers or presentations) missed due to legitimate circumstances beyond your control may be made up if arrangements are made with me in advance, or in a timely fashion upon your return to class. Daily exercises in a writing class cannot be reconstructed for any of you who happen to be absent; daily work missed due to tardiness or an absence (for any reason) cannot be made up. If an essay (a major graded work) is turned in a day after the due date, the overall grade is automatically dropped 1/3 of a grade. The overall grade drops by 1/3 of a grade for each late day, so A+ becomes an A for the first late day, an A becomes an A- for the second late day, and so on.

Journals Entries: Your journal entries will serve as your reader-response notes to the material read throughout the semester. Please read the “Reader Response Journals (Instructions)” document located in each unit on Blackboard.

Classroom (Behavior):
The Student’s Pledge of Honor, which you recited at the New Student Confirmation Ceremony, should guide your classroom behavior: “As a member of the Stillman College community, I pledge on my honor that I will not lie, cheat, steal, or destroy, nor will I tolerate or condone this in other members of the community. I will do all within my power to uphold the high standards of integrity, honor, and excellence of Stillman.”

- **Plagiarism Statement**: Any statement that is directly quoted or copied from another source must be documented. If it is not documented properly, it is considered plagiarism resulting in an F for the assignment and possible disciplinary action. Most assignments will be submitted to Safeassign in Blackboard to check for plagiarism. Any paper containing plagiarized material (from a published source, from another's paper, or from any other source) will be given a zero.

- The College policy regarding hats and other headwear in public buildings will be enforced.

- Show courtesy to your peers by arriving to class on time rather than arriving to class late.

- During class, you are required to turn off all cell phones, iPods, MP3 players, Podcasts, or anything that may distract not only you but also everyone else in the class from the lesson covered.

**FAFSA Information**: Students will be required to complete the online FAFSA form, which is available at [http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/). The instructor will provide students with a verification form that must be signed by a Financial Aid Officer and returned to the instructor by April 15, 2011.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**: If you have special needs to be addressed under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please identify yourself to Student Support Services personnel as directed so that we can work with the ADA coordinator to find reasonable accommodation.

**Required Materials**: Access to Blackboard is required for this course.

A folder and a loose-leaf notebook for notes, handouts, etc.


Tentative Class Schedule:

This schedule is a guideline and may be adjusted according to the needs of the class.

Unit 1: Fictional Experience (4 weeks)

Objectives: the students are expected to learn the following:

- plan and compose an effective analytical paper dealing with comparing and contrasting fiction (short stories)
- analyze thematic and literary devices involved with short stories
- compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and/or personal connection students may have with short stories
- identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
- utilize and navigate Blackboard
- examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
- recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
- apply MLA documentation style guide

Week 1: Jan. 16 – 20

READ: Chapter 3, “Exploration and Analysis: Genre and the Elements of Literature” pp. 60-69 (Exploring Literature); AND James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” (Exploring Literature); Appendix C, “Documentation”

Journal Entry #1, due Saturday, January 21st on Blackboard: If someone asked you to make an argument about either the narrator (name unknown) or the narrator’s brother, Sonny, in Baldwin’s short story, what would be your argument? Answer this question in 250 words. You are to integrate a passage from the short story into your journal entry. Make sure you provide a signal phrase, the actual “evidence” (summary, paraphrase, or quotation), and citation. Also include a works cited page. This journal entry should be typed in Microsoft Word Document and uploaded to the journal entry assignment on Blackboard. (See “File Saving Options” above in the Course Policy section of this syllabus.)

*** (Fri. Jan. 20 – Application for Degree Due in Registrar’s Office)
Week 2: Jan. 23 – 27

**READ:** John Updike’s “A&P” (*Exploring Literature*); AND Chapter 10, “Using Sources Effectively and Responsibly” pp. 134-149 (*Writer’s Harbrace Handbook*)

*** (Jan. 23 – **Last Day for Drop/Add**)

*** (Tue. Jan. 24 – **Mandatory Academic Advising Sessions, 11a.m.**)

*** (Thur. Jan. 26 – **Spring Convocation, Birthright Auditorium, 11 a.m.**)

Week 3: Jan. 30 – Feb. 3

**READ:** Rosario Morales’ “The Day It Happened” (*Exploring Literature*); AND Louise Erdrich’s “The Red Convertible” (*Exploring Literature*)

**Journal Entry #2, due Saturday, February 4th on Blackboard:** So far, you’ve read four short stories. Are there any aspects of the stories that are similar and/or different? Please elaborate on what you find similar and/or different. Answer this question in 250 words. You are to integrate a passage from the short story into your journal entry. Make sure you provide a signal phrase, the actual “evidence” (summary, paraphrase, or quotation), and citation. Also include a works cited page. This journal entry should be typed in Microsoft Word Document and uploaded to the journal entry assignment on *Blackboard.* (See “File Saving Options” above in the Course Policy section of this syllabus.)

*** (Fri. Feb. 3 – **Excessive Absences Reports Due from Faculty**)

Week 4: Feb. 6 – 10

**Due by Monday, February 6th at 12noon:** Introductory Paragraph to Major Essay #1 (Submit to *Blackboard*)

**Due by Thursday, February 9th at 11:59pm:** Full draft of Major Essay #1 (Submit to *Blackboard*)
Unit 2: Poetic Experience (5 weeks)

Objectives: The students are expected to learn the following:

- plan and compose an effective analytical paper dealing with comparing and contrasting poetry and its respective subjects / topics
- analyze thematic and literary devices involved with poetry
- compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and / or personal connection students may have with poetry
- identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
- utilize and navigate Blackboard
- examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
- recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
- apply MLA documentation style guide

Week 5: Feb. 13 – 17

READ: Chapter 3 (continued), “Exploration and Analysis: Genre and the Elements of Literature” pp. 73-88 (Exploring Literature); AND Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask”; AND Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool”; AND REREAD: Appendix C, “Documentation” pp. 1327-1334

Week 6: Feb. 20 – 24

READ THE FOLLOWING POEMS FROM Exploring Literature: Shirley Geok-Lin Lim’s

“Learning to Love America”; Claude McKay’s “America”; Marge Piercy’s “Barbie Doll”; AND Theodore Roethke’s “My Papa’s Waltz”

Journal Entry #3, due by Saturday, February 25th on Blackboard: Is there any poem that we have read thus far that you can relate to? If so, which poem or poems allow you to feel this way? If you are not able to relate to any of the poems, please express why this is so. Answer this question in 250 words. You are to
integrate a passage from the short story into your journal entry. Make sure you provide a signal phrase, the actual “evidence” (summary, paraphrase, or quotation), and citation. Also include a works cited page. This journal entry should be typed in Microsoft Word Document and uploaded to the journal entry assignment on Blackboard. (See “File Saving Options” above in the Course Policy section of this syllabus.)

Week 7: Feb. 27 – Mar. 2

READ THE FOLLOWING POEMS FROM Exploring Literature: Yusef Komunyakaa’s “Facing It”; Thomas Hardy’s “The Man He Killed”; Peter Meinke’s “Advice to My Son”; Dudley Randall’s “Ballad of Birmingham”; Gwendolyn B. Bennett’s “Heritage”

***(Tue. Feb 28 – Mandatory Academic Advising Sessions, 11 a.m.)

Mid-Semester Unit (1 Week)

Week 8: Mar. 5 – 9, MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS WEEK

READ THE FOLLOWING POEMS FROM Exploring Literature: Martin Espada’s “Coca-Cola and Coco Frío”; Nikki Giovanni’s “Woman”; AND Maya Angelou’s “Phenomenal Woman”


*** (Fri., Oct. 14 – Application for Degree Due in Registrar’s Office)

*** (Sat., Oct. 15 – SOPHOMORE PROFICIENCY EXAM / SENIOR DEPARTMENTAL EXIT EXAM)

Week 9: Mar. 12 – 16, STUDENT EVALUATION WEEK

Due by Monday, March 12th at 12noon: Introductory paragraph to Major Essay #2 (Submit to Blackboard)
Due by Thursday, March 15th at 11:59 p.m.: Full Draft of Major Essay #2 (submit to Blackboard)

*** (Sun. Mar. 11 – TIME SPRINGS FORWARD)

*** (Tue. Mar. 13 – Mid-Semester Grades Due)

*** (Fri. Mar. 16 – Excessive Absence Reports Due; and Spring Break Begins for Students at 5 p.m.)

Week 10 – SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY / WEEK!!! (Mar. 19 – 22)

Unit 3: MLA, Research, and Argumentation (6 weeks)
Objectives: The students are expected to learn the following:

- plan and compose an effective argumentative research paper dealing with fiction or poetry and its respective subjects / topics
- compose reader-response journal entries to help reflect on the relevance of and / or personal connection students may have with argumentation, research, and/or literary genres
- identify a construction of an appropriate and effective thesis statement
- utilize and navigate Blackboard
- examine and apply the appropriate grammar structures and punctuation via activities from The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook
- recognize appropriate in-text citation techniques
- apply MLA documentation style guide

Week 11: Mar. 26 – 30

READ: “Case Study in Research” pp. 193-204 (Exploring Literature); AND Appendix A, “Critical Approaches to Literature” pp. 1312-1318 (Exploring Literature)


*** (Wed. Mar. 28 – Fri. Mar. 30 – Student Evaluation of Instructor)

*** (Sat. Mar. 31 – SOPHOMORE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION and SENIOR DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATION)
Week 12: Apr. 2 – 6

READ: “Case Study in Biographical Context: Lorraine Hansberry and A Raisin in the Sun” pp. 343-435 (Exploring Literature)

Journal Entry #4, due by Saturday, April 7th on Blackboard: What do you know about research and combining research with your argument? Have you ever written a research paper? If so, what do you recall from that experience? If not, what insecurities might you have about writing a research paper?

Answer these questions in 250 words. This journal entry should be typed in Microsoft Word Document and uploaded to the journal entry assignment on Blackboard. (See “File Saving Options” above in the Course Policy section of this syllabus.)

***(Wed. Apr. 4 – Fri. Apr. 6 – Registration for Summer and Fall)

***(Thur. Apr. 5 – Honors Convocation, Birthright Auditorium, 11 a.m.)

Week 13: Apr. 9 – 13

READ: Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (Exploring Literature)

***(Sun. Apr. 8 – EASTER SUNDAY)

***(Mon. Apr. 9 – Fri. Apr. 13 – Senior Thesis Oral Presentations Due)

***(Sat. Apr. 14 – SENIOR DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS)

Week 14: Apr. 16 – 20
READ THE FOLLOWING WORKS FROM Exploring Literature: Frederick Douglass’s “Learning to Read and Write”; AND Joan Didion’s “Why I Write”

*(Mon. Apr. 16 – Senior Thesis Due)*

Week 15: Apr. 23 – 27

**Due by Monday, April 23rd at 12noon:** Introductory paragraph to Major Essay #3 (submit to Blackboard)

**Due by Thursday, April 26th at 11:59p.m.:** Full Draft of Major Essay #3 (submit to Blackboard)

*(Tue. Apr. 24 – Mandatory Academic Advising Sessions, 11 a.m.)*

*(Thur. Apr. 26 – CHAPEL, Birthright Auditorium, 11 a.m.)*

*(Fri. Apr. 27 – Last Day of Classes for Candidates for Graduation)*

Week 16: Apr. 30 – May 4 STUDY WEEK / FINALS

Reflection / Review

*(Mon. Apr. 30 – Semester Examinations for Candidates for Graduation; and Last Day for All Tests, Quizzes, etc.)*

*(Fri. May 4 – CANDIDATES FOR GRADUATION GRADES DUE BY 12 NOON; and Last Day of Classes)*

*(Sat. May 5 – Semester Examinations Begin)*

Final Exam: TO BE DETERMINED

*(Sat. May 12 – SPRING COMMENCEMENT; and Semester Ends)*
*** (Wed. May 11 – All Faculty Grade Rosters Due by 12 noon)

*** (Mon. May 21 – Summer Session Registration)

*** (Tue. May 22 – Summer Session Classes Begin)
APPENDIX J

Dr. Tanner’s Assignment Sheet

ENG 132: English Composition II

Major Essay #1 Writing Prompt

Select two or more short stories covered in Unit 1: Fictional Experience and compare, contrast, OR compare and contrast them to develop whatever argument of your choice. Remember to cite the text of the stories for support. You will need to analyze these stories in your comparison, contrast, or compare/contrast using ONE or TWO of the following areas:

- Characterization
- Setting
  - As a camera
  - As mood and symbol
  - As action
- Conflict
  - Internal
  - External
- Plot (Structure)
- Narration/point of view
  - First person
  - Third person
- Literary devices
  - Diction
  - Language
  - Tone

The essay is to be 750 words long, which is equivalent to three complete pages.

Remember that the Introductory Paragraph is to be submitted on Blackboard by the date indicated on your syllabus.

The full draft of the essay is to be submitted on Blackboard by the date indicated on your syllabus.
APPENDIX K

Dr. Winston’s Syllabus

Required Texts:
The LB Brief Handbook
Also required: Folders for handing in papers (You may need more than one)

Prerequisite: A grade of C or better in English 101

Course Objective
The purpose of this course is for students to become proficient in the academic writing and citation style and to become familiar with the kinds of research techniques that they will use in future course work. Topics will focus on works of literature in the genres of poetry, fiction, and drama. Students will be expected to write and think at a higher level of sophistication and have better command of Standard English grammar and punctuation than was expected of them in English 101. They will be expected to find and make proper use of various types of resources, to practice analytical and critical thinking processes, and to be effective editors of others’ work as well as their own.

Components of the Course

Papers
You will write three papers addressing problems or interpretations of literary works in poetry, fiction, and drama. You will turn in not only the final version of each essay, but also your prewriting exercises, drafts, and Xerox copies or printouts of any outside sources you may have used. The papers must be typed, double spaced, and must be in a folder. They are due in class on the designated day and must be submitted in person. Do not leave papers under my door; they are not considered submitted until I have checked them on my grade sheet. In addition to the printed copy, you must also submit an electronic version to safe assign in Blackboard. These must be in the Word 2003 format. If you use Word 2007, you will have to convert it in order for it to be accepted. (Safe Assign and the Digital Drop Box are not the same. You must use Safe Assign.)

You have a week to turn in the papers after the due date. After that I will not accept them and you will receive a failing grade for the class. The penalty for late papers is one letter grade for each class period they are late.

If you have a documented unforeseeable excused absence, you may turn in the paper with the documentation on the day you return to class. If you anticipate being absent on the day a paper is due, you should turn it in early.

Peer Groups
The writing and revising of papers involves sharing work in peer groups. You will be expected to bring copies of your work for the other members of your group and to take part actively in reading and commenting on the work of other students in your group.
Quizzes
There will be content-oriented quizzes on the reading assignments which will occur at the beginning of the class. They will be random but frequent. You will not be able to make up missed quizzes, but if your absence is excused, they will not be included in your average.

Recitation
You will choose one of President Obama’s speeches to memorize and recite to the class. You will also be asked to analyze various aspects of the speech before your recitation.

Final Exam
The final exam will cover grammar, punctuation, and diction problems that have occurred frequently in student papers during the semester.

Attendance and participation
You are allowed three unexcused absences without penalty for a MWF class and two for a T Th class. After the third unexcused absence, you will receive a penalty of three points for each unexcused absence. You must present verification for all excused absences. No excuses will be accepted after classes end. If you are ill but do not go to the health center, your absence will not be excused. Participation includes not only attending class, but also taking part in class discussions, bringing drafts with copies to class for group sessions, and making the best use of time in group sessions (working through the entire class period). You are responsible for all information presented in class whether or not you are present. Being absent, late, or inattentive are not excuses for not knowing about assignments, changes in the syllabus, or any other information that is pertinent. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, you must inform me at the end of the class period to avoid an absence.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading scale: A: 90 – 100, B: 80 – 89, C: 70 – 79, D: 60 – 69, E: below 60

Communication: Students and faculty are required to use mytu Google accounts for email communications. Please contact your instructor using this account rather than a personal account. Instructors are required to report unsatisfactory performance (attendance, quiz grades, etc.) using the Starfish program in Blackboard. Both instructors and students must have a profile in starfish. Announcements of special information may be communicated through Blackboard “Announcements.” Be sure to check your mytu email and Blackboard regularly.

You must submit three papers with accompanying material, and a final exam to receive a passing grade.

If you plagiarize, you will receive severe penalties: an E, a zero, or a failing grade for the class, depending on the extent of the plagiarism. I do not give make-up assignments. What you earn is what you get.
Week 1
January 11  Introduction to the course
13  Diagnostic Essay

Week 2
16  MLK Day No Class
18  Syllabus Quiz  Read pp. 15-17 and “Brownies”
20  Read pp. 28 - 33 and “The Tell-tale Heart”

Week 3
23  Meet in English lab
25  Read pp. 54-55 and “A Worn Path”
27  Read pp. 94 – 95 and “To Build a Fire”

Week 4
30  Grammar workshop, Bring handbook
Feb 1  pp 225 -228, and “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
3  Read sample essay on “The Tell-tale Heart” p 1108 and Topics for writing about fiction, pp. 131-32

Week 5
6  Planning Workshop for first paper
8  Revision workshop Bring drafts
10  First paper due. Read pp. 377 – 382 and “Out, Out”

Week 6
13  Read pp. 393 – 401 and “My Last Duchess”.
15  Read Irony, Pp. 406 – 408, and “The Hate Poem”
17  Read Allusion, p. 424, “Grass,” Pp. 437 – 440 and “Love Calls Us to the Things of This World”

Week 7
20  Read pp. 448 – 49, “Pied Beauty,” One Ton temple Bell,” “Driving to Town”
22  Read pp. 462 – 66, “Metaphors,” “Lightening is a Yellow Fork,” and “Fog”
24  Read pp. 512 – 16, “Let Me not to the Marriage of True Minds Admit Impediment” and “I Too”

Week 8
27  Read sample essay on pages 1111 – 1114 and topics for writing about poetry, pp. 1132 - 34
29  Grammar workshop. Bring graded first paper
Mar 2  Planning workshop for second paper
Week 9
5 Spring Break
7 "
9 "

Week 10
12 Revision workshop - Bring drafts
14 Second paper due Pp. 656-659, 679 – 681,
16 Read pp. 756-761. Introduction to Shakespeare

Week 11
19 Othello Act I
21 Othello Act II
23 Othello Act III

Week 12
26 Othello Act IV
28 Othello Act V
30 Read pp. 879 -880, Fences pp.1022 - 1055

Week 13
April 2 Fences pp. 1056 - 1079 and
4 Read sample essay on Othello pp. 1119 - 1123
6 Easter Break

Week 14
9 Easter Break
11 Planning workshop
13 Revising workshop  Bring drafts

Week 15
16 Third paper due. Recitation projects
18 First recitation assignment due
20 Second recitation assignment due

Week 16
23 recitations
25 recitations
27 recitations

Week 17
30 Grammar workshop and review
Cell Phone Etiquette

Cell phones and other electronic devices are extremely useful. They can save your life if you get in trouble, provide rescue if you are stranded, or make it easy to be connected to family, friends, or the internet. However, they can cause major interference with learning in the classroom. People whose phones ring, who send and receive text messages, or who leave the room to take calls miss valuable information and cause a disruption for teachers and other students. Therefore, the use of all electronic devices during class time is prohibited unless with express permission.

This means that you must turn off your phone before class begins, you must keep your cell phone in a book bag rather than in your pocket, and you are not allowed to leave the room to take calls. If you do not bring a bag in which to store your phone, you will have to hand it over to me while class is in session. This also applies to iPods or any other electronic device. Laptops may be used only at pre-designated times. If you are used to using these devices for note taking, you will have to take notes by hand and transfer them to your electronic device after class.

If you are seen using an electronic device of any kind during class, you will be asked to leave. If you use any electronic device during a quiz or exam, you will receive a grade of zero. If you leave the room to take a phone call, you will not be allowed back in the room, and in each of these cases, you will be considered absent for that class period. This rule may seem unfair, since people do sometimes have legitimate reasons for leaving the room, but since some people abuse the privilege, all must pay the consequences. I cannot make judgments about whether someone is leaving to use the restroom or to take a call. Take your bathroom break before class starts and carry tissue with you so you will not be penalized unnecessarily.

It is highly unlikely that any of you will actually need to use a phone during class time. It will not hurt you to be out of touch with your friends for fifty minutes. When you are in class, your complete attention should be directed toward learning—the purpose for being in school in the first place.
APPENDIX L

Dr. Winston’s Assignment Sheet

English 102  First Paper

Write a paper of approximately 900 words in which you give an interpretation of one of the short stories in your text book. The paper should include the following elements: a thesis statement which explains the main interpretative point of your paper, reasons why you think your interpretation is valid, and examples from the story itself to support your thesis, and support from critical sources. You may discuss the plot, characters, setting, imagery, or other literary elements, but you must use these ideas to support your thesis. You should use at least two critical sources and cite them using MLA citation style which requires both parenthetical citations in the text and a List of Works Cited. These sources should be used in support of your thesis rather than as a way of structuring your paper. You must cite every idea or quotation that comes from outside sources, whether quoted or paraphrased. When you paraphrase another's ideas, be sure that you change the wording and sentence structure completely.

Avoid plot summaries. You should assume that your reader has read the story. Everything in your paper should support the thesis in some way. Biographical information about the author should not be included unless it supports your thesis.

For sources, you should not use Wikipedia, student essays, paper mill essays, or internet postings. Some internet material is acceptable, but much of it is not. Be critical.

Using another’s ideas without giving credit, using exact wording without quotation marks, or following the original wording too closely are all types of plagiarism and can cause you to get a failing grade.

Your paper should be typed on a word processor, double spaced, and should not use type faces that are hard to read such as script or display fonts. Along with the paper you must turn in a draft and prewriting and submit a copy to safe Assign in Blackboard. For this paper, the prewriting should include the notes you make from your sources and at least one other such as an outline. A draft is NOT prewriting. Your draft must show evidence of the writing process, that is, it must not be identical to your final paper. You must also turn in Xerox copies or printouts of all the sources you use (A Works Cited Page is NOT a copy of sources). All of these items must be in a folder with your name on the front in the upper right corner. The first page of your paper should include your name, my name, the course name, and the date in the upper left corner, and subsequent pages should have a header on the upper right with your last name and the page number. The title should be centered. Do not use a title page.

Check List:

In the paper With the paper
Thesis prewriting (notes and one other)
Reasons draft
examples/support copies of sources
parenthetical citations
Works Cited page correct format
Dr. Tingle’s Syllabus

QEP Theme: Advancing Student Learning Through Enhancement of Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning

TOUGALOO COLLEGE
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES

English 101
Effective Writing

Course Description
This course studies effective writing.

CREDIT: THREE SEMESTER HOURS

QEP Component for Course:

Critical Thinking: Students who take this course must use critical thinking to formulate topics of discourse in class discussion, and to determine fruitful avenues of investigation in open-ended writing assignments.

Analytical Reasoning: Students who take this course must use analytical reasoning to pursue arguments and respond to questions in both class discussion and in written assignments.

Required texts:


**Additional required resources:**

Access to computer, internet, and Turnitin. Textbook and writing materials must be brought to class every day, along with any other current texts.

**Requirements and expectations:**

Complete all assignments by stated deadlines. Assignments turned in past the due date may affect your final grade. Assignments must demonstrate an understanding of the material presented. Assignments must additionally demonstrate reflection, application and synthesis of material covered.

Attend all class sessions and activities. Class attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will affect student grades. To get an absence excused, consult Dr. Rosie Harper in Jamerson Hall for the proper form. If you are absent from class, it is your to notify me and to get missed assignments and other instructions. All absences, whether excused or unexcused, may result in extra work assignments. The final exam time scheduled by the college is an important required class—plan to be there. Missing part of a class, either at the beginning or end, is a partial absence, and will usually be counted as at least a third of an absence. If you miss six classes, either excused or unexcused, you may fail the course.

Participate in all class activities, discussions, and projects. Unannounced quizzes will be given in class from time to time. If these are missed with an unexcused absence, they cannot be made up.

Please help make the class be a great place for learning, and avoid distractions. In particular, do not bring food to class, and keep your phone turned off. Because phones are a particular distraction, both for the user and for others, strict rules are unfortunately necessary: if you use a phone during class time you may be given an absence for that day, and asked to leave the room.
Do your own work. Do not copy the work of others or allow them to copy your work. If, in writing a paper, you rely on the ideas of others or use their words, cite your sources properly. If you are uncertain of whether and how to cite, ask for help. Two good discussions of plagiarism can be found here:
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml
http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html

Consequences of academic dishonesty in this course:
In courses up to and including ENG201, the assignment in question automatically receives a grade of F and the student receives a warning. If one quiz or test is copied from another, both students receive an F and a warning. In courses above ENG201, a single clear instance of plagiarism or cheating will be considered evidence of failure to meet the minimal academic requirements of the course, and will result in an F for the course, regardless of the quantity or quality of the student’s other work. If it is a repeat offense, I will recommend a change of major. All instances of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the student’s advisor, the English Department Chair, and the CSARS office.

Tougaloo College Expected Outcomes

- Tougaloo Graduates will be able to Communicate Verbally and Nonverbally in a variety of modes.
- Tougaloo Graduates will be able to Acquire and Process Information.
- Tougaloo Graduates will be able to Organize, Comprehend, and make Practical use of a wide variety of Materials, from the Sciences to the Arts.
- Tougaloo Graduates will be able to Apply Knowledge in a New Context.
- Tougaloo Graduates will be aware of Scientific Principles relating to health and the larger environment.
- Tougaloo Graduates will be able to Accept and Work through Ambiguity and Diversity, while Developing Strong Personal Values, Social Skills and a Sense of Ethics.
Tougaloo Graduates will have completed a program of Studies in a Specific Discipline or Area (Traditionally Called A Major) which has equipped them with a basic understanding of the concepts and principles of the discipline, and provided them with skills germane to it.

Goals:
1. To improve writing skills.
2. To improve communication skills, both oral and written.

Objectives:
To develop students’ writing skills. (INTASC 1, 7)
To increase familiarity with basic materials for historical, literary, and critical research. (INTASC 1, 7, 8, 9, 10)
To improve students’ communication skills, both oral and written. (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10)
To increase students’ ability to interpret and critique representative works. (INTASC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10)

Special Needs Statement
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Student Disabilities Service Team. Additionally, you may obtain useful information by contacting the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Education, P.O. Box 771 (or 369 NW Street), Jackson, MS 39205-0771.

Course Evaluation
Papers: 30%
Midterm exam and final exam: 40%
Attendance, classroom participation, quizzes and in-class essays: 30%

Grading Scale
90-100, A (Excellent)
80-89, B (Good)
70-79, C (Acceptable)
60-69, D (Poor)
below 60, F (Fail)

Assessment

- Complete all assignments by stated deadlines: All assignments must be neatly typed and turned in by the stated deadline. Assignments turned in past the due date may affect your final grade. Assignments must demonstrate an understanding of the material presented. Assignments must additionally demonstrate reflection, application and synthesis of material covered.

- Attend all class sessions and activities. Class attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will affect student grades. If you find it necessary to be absent from class, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor and ascertain what the instructor requires regarding missed assignments and information (see Tougaloo College 2001-2003 Course Catalog, p. 31)

- Participate in class activities, discussions, projects, observations, etc. Tougaloo’s students are expected to demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of current trends in education through oral reflection, hands on projects, class activities (written and verbal), and field experiences (observations and practicum).

- Use Standard English in class, both written and spoken: Tougaloo’s students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the use of Standard English in class, written and spoken.

- Tests: A mid-term and final exam will be given on the designated date for this course. Periodic quizzes (written and oral) will also be used to encourage student interest and application of knowledge gained from the course and other pertinent information.

Diversity Statement

Tougaloo College committed to creating a community that affirms and welcomes persons from diverse backgrounds and experiences and supports the realization of their human potential. We recognize that there are differences among groups of people and individual based on ethnicity, race socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area. All person is encouraged to respect the individual differences of others.

Caveat

(In the event of extenuating circumstances, the schedule and requirements for this course may be modified.)
**Class Attendance Policy**

Tougaloo College believes that its students must learn to take major responsibility for their own education. Tougaloo students are required to attend all of their classes and be responsible for all assigned course material and all material covered in class. When students are absent from class, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor and ascertain what the instructor requires regarding missed material or assignments.

**References**


Appendix A

STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE COURSE
STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSE

Name of Professor ___________________________   Date _________________

Course Number and Title _____________________________________________

Directions: Rate the course on each item, giving the highest scores for unusually effective performance. Place in the blank space before each statement the letter that most nearly expresses your view. If using computer cards, darken your response and use this form only for written comments.

Highest Average Lowest Don’t know or doesn’t apply-

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leave response blank

____ 1. The teacher meets the class regularly.

____ 2. The teacher begins and ends the class promptly.

____ 3. The objectives of the course were made clear at the beginning.

____ 4. The objectives of the course clearly determined what was taught.

____ 5. The instructor made known his/her method of evaluating students at the beginning.

____ 6. The instructor made good use of time.

____ 7. The instructor was well prepared for each meeting.
8. The instructor lectured at the level of the students' comprehension.

9. The instructor clearly summarizes and/or emphasized major points in the lecture.

10. The proper amount of material was covered on the subject matter.

11. The instructor mastered the course content.

12. The instructional materials were relevant.

13. The instructor encouraged students to think critically and analytically for themselves.

14. The method of instruction was appropriate for the class size.

15. The instructor was attentive to the needs of the class.

16. The instructor communicated well with the students.

17. The instructor had an impartial attitude toward the students.

18. The students were encouraged to express relevant opinions.

19. The teacher graded reasonably.

20. The instructor accepted constructive criticism.

21. The instructor encouraged students to seek his/her help when needed.

22. The instructor was available for the student.

23. The instructor showed concern for the student’s progress and was actively helpful.

24. Students seek this instructor’s advice.

25. The teacher initiates conferences with students.

26. The instructor respected students as persons.

27. This course stimulated student interest.
28. The attitude of fellow class members toward the instructor was good.

29. This course has been an effective learning experience.

30. Considering the previous items, rate this teacher in comparison to all others you have had in the department.

31. Considering the previous items, rate this teacher in comparison to all others you have had in the institution.

In order to assist with self-improvement of the teacher, in your own words, please write your opinion of this instructor and the course. The comments will be shared with the instructor only after the course is completed.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
General Technology Objective:

Rationale:

Research has shown that when information is processed by more than one memory, it strengthens the learning potential. Additionally, research has suggested that visuals used in connection with lecture materials increase comprehension and retention of information (Loving, 1997). The generalization based on this research was that in a learning environment, materials that were presented in a visual, auditory, and/or a tactical manner would have the greatest chance of being processed and retained by students. Thus technology, in the classroom, allows students to see, touch, feel, analyze, explore, and experience many other useful and meaningful challenges in their learning endeavors. The Division of Education, Supervision, and Instruction articulates the infusion of technology in all of its courses.

Objectives:

The students will demonstrate mastery of the following objectives:

The student will

1. Demonstrate basic operations and concepts as they relate to technology;
2. Demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of Technology systems;
3. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of basic technology;
4. Discuss social, ethical, and human issues relative to technology;
5. Practice responsible use of technology systems, information and software;
6. Develop and demonstrate positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
7. Use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity
8. Use telecommunication tools to collaborate, publish, interact with faculty and peers, and other audiences;
9. Use technology research to explore, locate, process, evaluate and collect information from a variety of sources;
10. Use technology resources as problem-solving and decision-making tools;

11. Design learning activities that foster equitable, ethical, and legal use of technology;

12. Describe current instructional principles, research, and appropriate assessment practices as related to the use of computer/technology and distance education resources in the curriculum;

13. Design, deliver and assess student learning activities that use computers/technology to provide for a variety of student grouping strategies and for diverse student populations.
Appendix C

INTERSTATE NEW TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT CONSORTIUM
STANDARDS

(INTASC)
Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards

(INTASC)

GOAL: To create an awareness of the change from using the Mississippi Teachers’ Assessment Instrument (MATI) to using the INTASC Standards in pre-service programs and first year teach evaluations.

MODEL STANDARDS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

Principle I Understands that central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the disciplines taught; creates learning experiences to make them meaningful to students.

Principle II Understands how children learn and develop; provides learning opportunities that support their development.

Principle III Understands students differ in their approaches to learning; creates instruction opportunities adapted to diverse learners.

Principle IV Understands and uses a variety of instruction strategies.

Principle V Creates a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.

Principle VI Uses knowledge of communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction.
Principle VII  Plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum goals.

Principle VIII  Understands and uses formal and informal assessment.

Principle IX  Reflects on teaching.

Principle X  Fosters relationships with colleagues, parents and agencies in the larger community.
APPENDIX N

IRB Approval

November 12, 2012

Kedra Lavon James
Department of English
College of Arts & Sciences
Box 870244

Re: IRB#: 12-OR-003-ME-R1 “First-Year Writing Programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities”

Dear Ms. James:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your renewal application.

Your protocol has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on November 11, 2013. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Càrdellia T. Myler, MSM, LIM
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office of Research Compliance
The University of Alabama
January 4, 2012

Kendra Laverne James
Department of English
College of Arts & Sciences
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 12-OR-003-ME: "First-Year Writing Programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities"

Dear Ms. James:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your protocol has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on January 3, 2013. If the study continues beyond that date, you must complete the IRB Renewal Application. If you modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure form.

Please provide participants with a copy of the attached participant information sheet.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carroll M. Myles, M.D., M. C.I.M.
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance
The University of Alabama