

Student Responses to 1010, Austin Peay University in Clarksville, TN, 2004/5

Teacher's Note:

The following student comments are on group work, team work, and individual class work, collected from 40 students in two classes who responded to in-class prompts. To minimize gendered references, the 40 names were arbitrarily changed to X, Y, Z, A, B, C. D.

Each paragraph constitutes a passage from one student's in-class writing. I deleted comments like, "My study buddy is a preacher's daughter," or "My teammate told me about her kidney stones." Students are encouraged to write about their own class work and writing experience rather than comment on a buddy.

The "comments" assignment followed three weeks of course work. At the outset the writers constructed profiles of themselves within family or community, which they were encouraged to expand through my written comments: "Tell me about this," or "How did this happen?" or "How said! Can you expand?" or "Give further detail."

For the remainder of the semester, students will periodically absolve self-reflective writing such as the segments below. I distributed copies of these pages to all the writers of the paragraphs below.

Excerpts from In-Class Written Comments:

My study group for the past couple of weeks has been exciting and brand new for me. My study buddies and I have gotten to know each other, not only personally but in regards to education as well. We help each other find ideas for our essays. We also help each other look for things that we would not normally think of, such as expanding on our heritage or making the best of a "dead-end paragraph." I am grateful for my study buddies X and A; if you get the chance, please tell them thank you. This class has been amazing to me. I still have a ways to go but expect to become a better writer in this class.

My study buddy for English 1010 has been X. We read each other's profiles and gave each other ideas for the direction of our personal essay. I have also worked in groups with X, Y, Z, and A. I have enjoyed the small-group format; it gave me ideas from other people regarding the class work. I am excited about English 1010 and about learning and practicing writing. I also look forward to reading X's essay.

My first day of English class I was excited with the way the syllabus was set up. I acquired a study buddy, X, and began my study of English 1010. Unfortunately, as the class progressed, I

found myself disappointed. I have learned many useful things; however, I feel the class lacks a college-level of study. I've learned how to write already. I know about sentence structure and essays. Perhaps I belong in an advanced class. I enjoy my teacher. My classmates are creative and friendly. I will try to learn all I can.

Coming into this class, I was very scared. I had no clue what I was getting myself into. Now that I am here and know what it is like, I have a positive outlook. This class already has made me a better writer. I am learning to express myself more openly. I also now have the experience of college life and meeting new people. I'm excited about the rest of the year.

During English group assignments I have worked with both X and Y. Both were very helpful in giving me ideas about my paper. They have easy-going personalities and make perfect group members. Without this requirement to join a group, I never would have gotten to know anyone in class.

Becoming acquainted with fellow classmates is something I appreciate about English 1010. I partner with X and have also worked in small groups. We discuss any concerns or misunderstandings over assignments, and we are developing relationships as well. I am worried that the professor will find my writing not descriptive enough. Everything I write is personal, but I am concerned it may not be viewed in that manner.

I have enjoyed getting to know new people in this class. In group I have worked with X and Y. X is my study buddy because we are in the same situation. We worked together in high school. [Comment deleted] Already I have made much progress. I find myself being more aware of what I'm writing. My pronoun usage has become better also. I know I will become a better writer.

My study buddy has been primarily X. I have enjoyed her input due to her maturity and life experiences. In addition to X, my group has included Y, who brings a youthful enthusiasm to our group. I do find that the exclusion of the [generic] masculine reference shows a degree of bias. Aside from this, I have found this course rather remarkable. However, I do not wish to write papers based on personal information. As a person with a rather reserved personality, I find it uncomfortable to disclose such things to people I barely know. [Comment deleted]

My English 1010 has been good thus far. My study buddy has been X. In groups, the people have been X, Y, Z, A, and B. We discuss what inspires us to write and what to write about. We also try to help each other out. Writing is very difficult for me. I hope after this class I'll be able to write a paper and it will make sense. I like to write; I'm just not particularly good at it.

I have been fortunate to have Ms X as my study buddy. We have discussed our favorite subjects in writing and have pointed out places where we could expand information. The people I worked

with as a group were A and B. We discussed sections of the textbook and good computer info from the Little Brown [grammar reader].

I have been working with Ms. A. We work well with each other, get along, and have some other common interests. The personal essay we are working on is our first paper. I have gained some confidence in my writing and feel I can accomplish a well-written paper. So far I have a good paragraph. I have great ideas for my essay and feel I can accomplish my goal.

English 1010 has become a fascinating class. I have developed an interest in my fellow classmates due to the discussions about our personal essays. Mostly I've worked with Z. We seem to have a lot in common because our close relationships with our mothers. [Comment deleted] I have also found discussions with Ms. Y very helpful, who has an extensive vocabulary and expresses her ideas clearly. I have also worked with Mr. X, and his insight helps me to better understand the difference between the mind and speech of a woman versus that of a man. The reading assignments seem very basic but they have improved my problem areas, such as connecting ideas from one sentence to the next, the dreadful comma issues, and choosing the correct pronoun.

Mr. X is my study buddy. We get along very well. We often discuss why people write what they do and how they portray their ideas and feelings. We discuss what they write about or the language they choose. In the readings, we compare preparation techniques. We compare our strengths and weaknesses. I love that you can sit and talk with someone and get to know a little about the person and then see how it reflects in his or her writing.

My writing skills have not been used since high school three years ago. My main problem is usually motivation and getting started. I like getting into groups because it helps me get ideas for my writing. I like getting ideas from classmates because I feel they can relate to what I am saying more than professors do. My study buddy has been X, and the people in my group have been A, B, C, and X.

In English 1010, I have made two new study buddies, A and B. A was previously in the military. B has interesting ideas because of her cultural difference. We have worked together trying to help one another organize thoughts for a paper. Since the beginning of this class three weeks ago, my greatest accomplishment has been with the grammar exercises. Before this class, I was not conscious of pronoun agreement or tense agreement.

My study buddy so far has been X. She is very funny and has a lot of interesting ideas. Two other people are in our group, A and B. We enjoy talking about different topics and getting to know each other. The progress I have made so far has to do with writing in more detail. I've never had to examine my life before and to describe what led up to the event I am writing about.

My English 1010 thus far has been a challenge. I do not like to write about myself and would prefer a subject matter other than ourselves. The name of my study buddy is X. I have worked with two different groups. The first one included X and Y. The second included A and B. I enjoyed both groups. But as of right now, I don't care about the class because we should be able to write on any subject, not just ourselves. [Comment deleted]

English seems more fun than it did before, which is great because I have never been too happy with it. All the people in the class seem very willing to get to know each other. My study buddy is X, who is very kind-hearted. I am glad to have her not only in English but in my APSU 1000 as well.

This class has a good combination of people. I have enjoyed getting to know them. I do not have a specific study buddy; I pair with a quiet or talkative person depending on my mood for that day. Some of my group members include A, B, and C. Each of these people gives the group uniqueness. A is a wife and mother, B was in the military, and C is fresh out of high school. I have not done things to my usual standards. None of my papers have been any good. I think I have lost my motivation. Writing has become more difficult for me.

My English 1010 class has gotten progressively harder. We went from reading the syllabus to actually doing work. I am progressing in my knowledge but find that some things like pronoun agreements can be tricky. Our work so far has been writing. We continue to prepare for our first essay. The other students in the class are probably dreading this essay as much as I am. The only person in class I have really talked with is X. He is the other half of my group. He is pretty smart and better at the grammar exercises than I am. I believe I am on a par with my classmates.

I was the last to enroll in this class. Everyone is already adjusted. I'm still trying to figure out what is going on. I feel like some kind of an outcast, and that is not why I came here. [Comment deleted] This student has come to class only twice, the first time 15 min. late.]

My English 1010 has been a lot different than any of my other classes. I am normally used to doing a lot of different kinds of writing. I am not used to repetitive things, such as when we take the roll. The Consistency of Tense exercise was a refresher course.

In this class I met Y. When I write things in class, I share my writing with him. He is the only person I have paired up with and I feel that we are comfortable with each other. This class is helping me become more descriptive in my writing and more observant to the things that go on around me. I still need help with closing and opening statements as well as with comma rules and some other punctuation.

My study buddy is X on the days that she decides to come to class. On the days that she is not here, I try to help her out. Some days she is very tardy [or] she forgets that we have English. I may have to find another study buddy. I have also worked with other people who are not here today. The groups have been fun. I enjoy the large group because you get to hear from more people in class. It gives me the opportunity to get more comfortable with my classmates. I have definitely made progress in this class. I think I am learning well from your style of teaching.

One of our first assignments was to team up with two or more fellow students and discuss our writing. I teamed up with A and B. the next time I got together with X. Our mission was to get a better focus of where we planned to go with our first essay, based on our personality profiles. When I first started this class, I thought it would be fairly easy for me as I have been writing for many years and was taking this as a prerequisite to upper-level English classes. I was in for an awakening. This class is happily more challenging than I expected. I am learning, or will learn, how to better focus my writing and how to organize my thoughts in a more coherent and efficient way before writing them down. The [text]books offer some nice tips, which I plan to use as we start writing our essays.

I must admit I am still trying to get a handle on your teaching methods. [Comment deleted] I am enjoying the class and I enjoy the group work even more. The members of my group, A, B. and C, have made it easy to openly discuss the information for the personal essay. I find that the more I discuss, the more ideas I seem to come up with. The group members and I are open to constructive criticism. In our group, new ideas and good advice circulate smoothly with no qualms, hurt feelings, or stubborn minds.

My experience in English 1010 has been very interesting thus far. The teacher speaks English very well. The class size is near thirty, with age-range from entering freshmen to mothers deciding to give college a try. I sit near my friend X, with whom I work at Austin Peay. He doubles as my study buddy. Whenever there is a group discussion, X and I tackle the issues. Sometimes we switch and group with other people around the classroom. My progress hasn't been great. English is not my strongest subject, but I still have high hopes for this class.

I have been working with A, who is going to write about his father. We talked about what we were going to write about. I do not know who my group members are because they are not here today. Right now [the class] covers things I know. I had a great teacher in high school. She worked with us on grammar and essay writing. [Comment deleted]

My English 1010 thus far has been very interesting. I am able to express myself to a certain extent with a study buddy. I believe that working with a study buddy enables each student to get advice from another student and to gain confidence . . . On my first day of class, I thought I would be unable to catch on to my professor's teaching methods; however, she teaches the class very well. I am now able to think critically and am learning to analyze, which helps me write

well. Even though I have not written much in my class [comment on this], I am still able to think differently.

My English 1010 thus far has been everything I expected it to be. I knew it would be a transition for me. The writing style was difficult for me to grasp. My first assignment was rather difficult. Every topic I wrote was rather vague and general. I simply did not know what Ms. Cook meant by general. [Comment deleted.]

My study buddy is X. We went to the same high school. I am glad to get to know here now. She has a very interesting background and has already taught me much. I like hearing about her family, too; it reminds me of my own. My group members are X and Y. Both are very helpful when I need a second opinion. It's nice having groups in class because you can find common ground and don't feel so alone in your situation. I think it will take some time for me to advance. I sometimes feel that I may need more guidance than others.

In this English 1010 class, I have wonderful study partners. They are A, B, and C. I really value what B has to say because she has been out of school for so long. She has real-world experiences that are valuable information for me. A and C offer valuable opinion because they are going through the same freshmen experiences as I am. I have a difficult time getting started in this writing course. I feel I'm floundering for the right words. I cannot seem to find anything deep or meaningful to write about. It is hard for me to talk about myself. I am the type of person who keeps her feelings bottled up inside and does not share much with anyone. [Comment deleted]

I think I might enjoy being a writer. I might choose a career as a novelist. The Personal Profile allows me to examine my life in many ways. I am sure this English class will help me evolve into a responsible adult. [Comment deleted]

My study buddy is Y. She is really sweet and funny. She helped me when I was absent to get me back on track. I know I can depend on her when it comes to my school work. I think working in groups is a good idea because listening to a professor can cause me to lose interest. So far I have not learned anything new. The things we are talking about is review for me. I hope to learn to organize my thoughts on paper. I have so much to say and I want it to make sense. I hope we do a little reading because that is one of my stronger areas.

My English 1010 is going well. My study buddy is X, who is a good study buddy. My group consists of X, Y, and me. We stay on task and work well together. I haven't always had time to study for this class. I am trying to devote more time to my studies, but I also have to work. I have, however, cut back on my hours of work so that I may have more time for school.

My study buddy is A. My group members are B, C, and A. As for my progress, I am struggling a bit. Perhaps due to my lack of practice, I am having difficulty applying the requirements, although I understand the objectives. I am going to read again the chapters we have covered so far.

My study buddy's name is X. I like working with her because she give me negative as well as positive feedback on my writing. She is a good friend of mine and we planned our schedules so we could have classes together. For group discussion, a woman named Y joins us. I like working in groups because I have more than one opinion on my paper. English has never been a strong subject for me. Maybe it's all the reading on uninteresting topics. But I still put effort into my homework or writing papers.

My study buddy is A. We attended high school together and we are close friends. Our group consists of A, Z, and myself. We discussed the in-class writing, the reading assignment from the previous night, and ourselves. I have relearned MLA format, essay writing, and punctuation. I have trouble picking out a specific subject. My memory is about as long as a goldfish's. It is easier for me to research something than to write about personal experience.

I never had only one study buddy. I worked with groups. My group members included A, B, C, and D. I enjoy working with other students. Group work makes learning more comfortable and fun. I never feel alone because someone else is struggling with the same problem. My writing needs more detail. I have learned that a writer must not assume that the audience knows what he or she is talking about. I enjoy that Ms. Cook encourages her class to share its writing aloud. I also enjoy the encouragement, the group work, and the group evaluation.

My study buddy is A. We are both from Dickson, Tennessee. We have a lot in common and are able to give lots of feedback on the topics we are studying and discussing. The members of my group change every time, but A is almost always in my group. I get to hear many different ideas. I think that, while I am not making dramatic progress, I am still improving. I am learning better ways to start essays. I am more comfortable with writing about myself and writing in general. I am becoming more practiced in my pronoun usage.