English 1101/1102 Multimodal Reflective Portfolio

Instructions updated for Spring 2017

For the culminating assignment in English 1101 and 1102, you will finalize and submit a multimodal reflective portfolio (which functions in lieu of a final exam). For your portfolio, you will select evidence from your body of work in the course, provide a context for this evidence, and describe the ways in which the evidence supports your argument that you have met particular outcomes.

This document about the required multimodal reflective portfolio provides information about your portfolio's rhetorical situation (including audience, purpose, and context), the contents of the portfolio, and the processes of creating and submitting a portfolio through Georgia Tech's online portfolio application, Mahara.

The Rhetorical Situation of the ENGL 1101/1102 Portfolio

Audience

Your audience for this portfolio *is not your instructor*—or, at least, it is not *primarily* your instructor. In addition to your instructor assessing your portfolio for a grade, other professors from the Writing and Communication Program will read and evaluate your complete portfolio for programmatic assessment (which helps determine how well ENGL 1101 and 1102 are meeting the educational outcomes set for these courses). These instructors will review portfolios during the next semester, so their assessment does not relate to your grade for this assignment. For this reason, you should assume your audience did not participate in your specific English class but is familiar with Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program. You may want to think of your portfolio as persuading someone who doesn't know you that you have met the stated outcomes of the course.

Purpose

The purpose of the multimodal reflective portfolio is to demonstrate and reflect about how well you have met the outcomes established for English 1101 and 1102 at Georgia Tech. English 1101 and 1102 emphasize the composition of research-based multimodal arguments through a rigorous, rhetorically sensitive, and reflective process. The courses teach the habits of effective communication as discussed in the course outcomes, which are included in your class syllabus.

Reflection

When you explain why you made a change in revising a draft, you are more likely to remember that reason the next time you are faced with a similar composing task. Thus, a reflective portfolio serves multiple purposes for your learning:

- It enables you to document the ways your efforts have met the stated course outcomes.
- It requires you to reflect about your learning this semester, which research indicates will improve your ability to transfer this strategic knowledge to other situations.

In a portfolio, the quality of evidence (*what* you did) is as important as the reflection (*why* you did it). Reflection always begins with evidence, but it never ends there. You should identify not only what you did, but *why* you did it in relationship to the outcomes of the course. For example, if you want to

discuss the ways you revised the organization of a paper or poster, you need to explain *why* you changed the organization: Why is the new organization more effective? How does it respond to the audience or reflect the purpose of your artifact? By answering these questions, you not only demonstrate your engagement in the writing process but also demonstrate that you have developed a clearer understanding about the ways in which the sequence of your points might persuade your audience.

Contents of the Portfolio

In order to demonstrate that you have met the stated competencies, you will compile a portfolio of work using the online portfolio platform Mahara. The purpose of your portfolio is to demonstrate your habits of effective communication.

Your Mahara portfolio is a collection of individual pages you create. You create these pages (one for the reflective essay and one for each artifact) and then make a collection of the pages. The portfolio is that collection.

Your portfolio must include the following pages in Mahara:

1. Reflective Introduction to the Portfolio: A page for a **1200-1800 word essay** that introduces your portfolio and strategically employs multimodal elements such as images, videos, audio files, and/or links in addition to your text.
2. Artifact 0: A page for your **multimodal diagnostic video**, which you produced during the first week of class, along with a **short reflection** answering directed questions about the artifact.
3. Artifacts 1-3: A page for each of **three additional artifacts** that together best reflect your work and development in the course, along with **short reflections** answering directed questions for each artifact:
    a. At least one artifact must emphasize **standard written English**.

        Example artifacts include essays, reports, proposals, or blog posts.

    b. At least one artifact must emphasize **oral and non-verbal communication**.

        Example artifacts include speeches, presentations, podcasts, and performances.

        Note: if you do not have a recorded oral/non-verbal artifact (for example, you did a class presentation or performance that was not recorded), you should submit a detailed description of the oral and non-verbal components of your presentation/performance along with a script, handout, and/or PowerPoint/Prezi that accompanied the presentation.

    c. At least one artifact must reflect **intentional visual design.**

        Example artifacts include pamphlets, posters, presentation aids, videos, visual art, websites, or reports/essays with intentional design.

    d. At least one artifact must reflect **electronic communication**.

        Example artifacts include websites, wiki pages, blogs, Twitter feeds, video, or audio.

    e. At least one artifact must reflect a **substantial revision process.**

        The revision process must be exemplified through process documents, the most common of which are multiple drafts. Other options include brainstorming notes, outlines, proposals, drafts with peer review letters, draft cover letters, video reflections, etc.

Both the quality of the selected artifacts and the quality of the reflections will be considered in the programmatic assessment of your portfolio.

Composing the Reflective Introduction to the Portfolio

Write a reflective essay of 1200-1800 words that makes an argument about your work this semester, focusing on the artifacts you chose for your portfolio. (You may want to think of this essay as a way to help your readers understand and make sense of the work you did this semester and allow them to understand the ways you developed as a communicator.)

This reflective essay should do the following intellectual work:

- Analyze evidence from your portfolio in order to make a specific and focused argument about your own intellectual growth as a communicator in this course.
- Articulate the intellectual and communicative priorities of the course as you understand them (see the list of course outcomes on the syllabus and also consider also your instructor's goals concerning the content of your course).
- Reflect upon your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the course outcomes.
- Describe the methods and modes that were the focus of your communicative work in the course.
- Articulate areas and strategies you would like to focus on for continued improvement.

You **should not** simply write a paragraph about each topic in this order. Rather, just as you would with any assignment in this course, you should determine what would be the most effective approach given your audience, purpose, argument, and context. In other words, this essay should prove what you have learned not only by analyzing what you have learned in each artifact but also by enacting that knowledge in this essay. (For example, if you say you have learned to better organize your arguments to persuade your audience, your reflective essay should be a well-organized argument that persuades your readers of your competence.) Your reflective essay should be multimodal, including images, screen shots, embedded video, sound, and/or other media.

However, your reflective essay need not cover *everything* you learned in the course. Instead, it should reflect the most important learning—concepts, strategies, skills, practices, approaches—that you acquired, in relation both to the course outcomes and to your own priorities as a student.

Figure 1 presents an example of an ENGL 1101 reflective essay—including written text, section headers, and an embedded Prezi presentation.

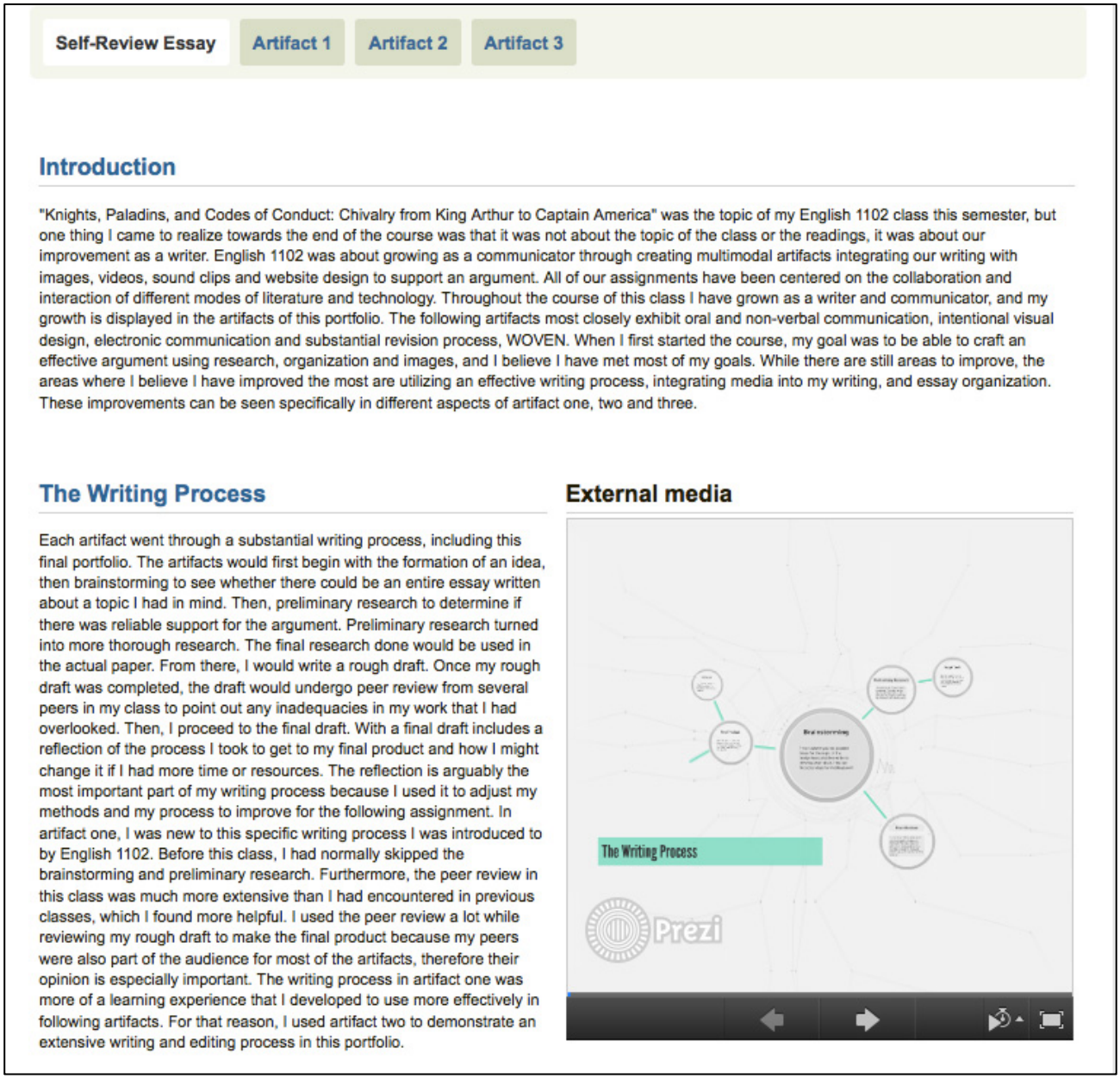


Figure 1. Screenshot of a self-review essay with built-in Prezi. Source: Kelsey Meyers.

Composing Your Artifact Reflections

For artifacts 0, 1, 2, and 3, write a **one-paragraph introduction to the artifact that articulates your intellectual process in composing this artifact**. Put another way, explain where your ideas came from and the ways they evolved during the course of the project. You should also discuss ways composing processes (examples: prewriting, outlining, drafting, peer reviewing, revising, editing) affected your intellectual process, and vice versa.

After the introductory paragraph, **compose two or three bullet points answering each of the following questions. Each point should consist of one to three complete sentences that directly address the question**. We recommend you review the assignment sheet you received for the assignment before composing your answers.

a. What were the main intellectual goals of the assignment? Please situate these goals in terms of the course theme and in terms of the communication strategies you were to learn or practice.

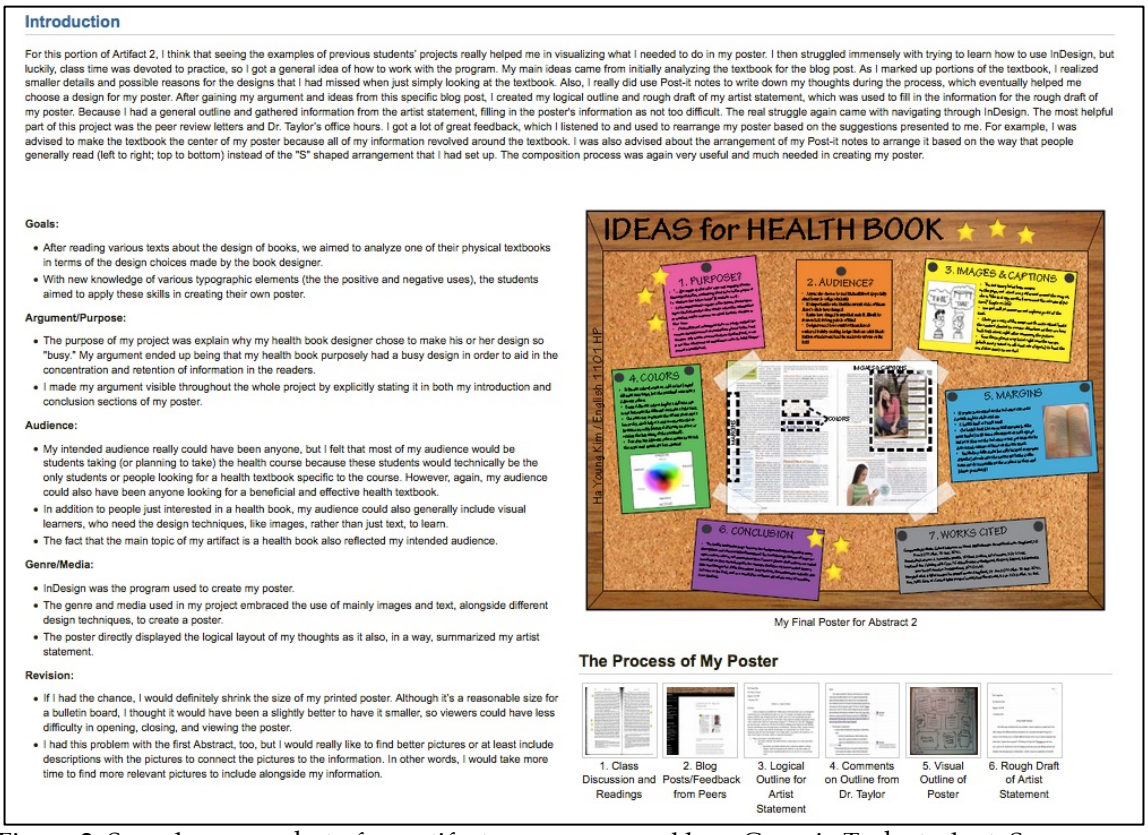
b. What is your argument or purpose? How did you make the argument or purpose visible and persuasive in your artifact?

c. Who is the intended audience for your artifact; why is this an appropriate audience? How is your choice of audience reflected in your artifact?

d. What are the defining features of the genre or media that you are using in this project? How do you make use of these features?

e. If you had more time for revision, what would you change and why?

Figure 2 shows a completed artifact page, including the artifact itself, a one-paragraph introduction, and answers to the reflective questions.



Introduction

For this portion of Artifact 2, I think that seeing the examples of previous students' projects really helped me in visualizing what I needed to do in my poster. I then struggled immensely with trying to learn how to use InDesign, but luckily, class time was devoted to practice, so I got a general idea of how to work with the program. My main ideas came from initially analyzing the textbook for the blog post. As I marked up portions of the textbook, I realized smaller details and possible reasons for the designs that I had missed when just simply looking at the textbook. Also, I really did use Post-it notes to write down my thoughts during the process, which eventually helped me choose a design for my poster. After gaining my argument and ideas from this specific blog post, I created my logical outline and rough draft of my artist statement, which was used to fill in the information for the rough draft of my poster. Because I had a general outline and gathered information from the artist statement, filling in the poster's information as not too difficult. The real struggle again came with navigating through InDesign. The most helpful part of this project was the peer review letters and Dr. Taylor's office hours. I got a lot of great feedback, which I listened to and used to rearrange my poster based on the suggestions presented to me. For example, I was advised to make the textbook the center of my poster because all of my information revolved around the textbook. I was also advised about the arrangement of my Post-it notes to arrange it based on the way that people generally read (left to right; top to bottom) instead of the "S" shaped arrangement that I had set up. The composition process was again very useful and much needed in creating my poster.

Goals:

- After reading various texts about the design of books, we aimed to analyze one of their physical textbooks in terms of the design choices made by the book designer.
- With new knowledge of various typographic elements (the the positive and negative uses), the students aimed to apply these skills in creating their own poster.

Argument/Purpose:

- The purpose of my project was explain why my health book designer chose to make his or her design so "busy." My argument ended up being that my health book purposely had a busy design in order to aid in the concentration and retention of information in the readers.
- I made my argument visible throughout the whole project by explicitly stating it in both my introduction and conclusion sections of my poster.

Audience:

- My intended audience really could have been anyone, but I felt that most of my audience would be students taking (or planning to take) the health course because these students would technically be the only students or people looking for a health textbook specific to the course. However, again, my audience could also have been anyone looking for a beneficial and effective health textbook.
- In addition to people just interested in a health book, my audience could also generally include visual learners, who need the design techniques, like images, rather than just text, to learn.
- The fact that the main topic of my artifact is a health book also reflected my intended audience.

Genre/Media:

- InDesign was the program used to create my poster.
- The genre and media used in my project embraced the use of mainly images and text, alongside different design techniques, to create a poster.
- The poster directly displayed the logical layout of my thoughts as it also, in a way, summarized my artist statement.

Revision:

- If I had the chance, I would definitely shrink the size of my printed poster. Although it's a reasonable size for a bulletin board, I thought it would have been a slightly better to have it smaller, so viewers could have less difficulty in opening, closing, and viewing the poster.
- I had this problem with the first Abstract, too, but I would really like to find better pictures or at least include descriptions with the pictures to connect the pictures to the information. In other words, I would take more time to find more relevant pictures to include alongside my information.

My Final Poster for Abstract 2

The Process of My Poster

1. Class Discussion and Readings
2. Blog Posts/Feedback from Peers
3. Logical Outline for Artist Statement
4. Comments on Outline from Dr. Taylor
5. Visual Outline of Poster
6. Rough Draft of Artist Statement

Figure 2. Sample screen shot of an artifact page composed by a Georgia Tech student. Source: Ha Young Kim.

Using Mahara to Create Your Portfolio

Mahara portfolios are collections of individual pages. You create individual **pages** (one for the self-review essay and one for each artifact) and then make a **collection** out of the pages—the multimodal reflection portfolio is that collection.

Every Georgia Tech student has access to Mahara at http://mahara.gatech.edu.

Creating Pages

To create your portfolio in Mahara, you first need to create an individual page for each artifact.

1. Under the "Portfolio" tab on the Mahara home page, click "Pages" and then select "Create Page" from the dropdown menu.
2. Give the page a title on the edit page screen, choose a display name (we recommend either your last name or student ID, but any of the options are fine). Click "save."
3. Click the "Edit Layout" tab. (Note that Mahara automatically jumps to "Edit Content" after you click "save" on the previous page, but you'll want to modify the layout first.) Note that Mahara provides a selection of "Basic Layouts" and a link to "Advanced Layouts" on the edit layouts page. Under advanced layouts, you can create and modify your own layouts by deciding how many columns will be in a row and what percentage of the screen width each column will take. Mahara will limit each page to six rows and five columns per row.
4. Click "Save" once you've chosen a layout. Mahara will jump back to "Edit Content." Note the list of types of content that can be included on the page. Drag and drop the different options where you want them on the page. Mahara differentiates between hosted media that can be uploaded directly to Mahara and external media that are linked to from within Mahara (such as Prezis, YouTube Videos, Google Docs, etc.). Note that the former options are listed under "Media" while the later is listed under "External."
5. Click "Done" when you have placed all the content you want on that page. Repeat until you've created all your pages.

Creating a Collection

1. Once all pages are complete, create a collection by selecting the "Portfolio" tab and then clicking "Collections" and then "New Collection." Give your collection a title that includes your student ID number (the 9-digit number found on your BuzzCard) and the course number. Example: "987654321 English 1102 Reflection Portfolio." Make sure "Page Navigation" option is checked (this is done automatically), and then select "Edit Collection Pages"
2. Add pages to your collection by checking the pages that should be included. Place the self-review essay page first. The organization of the rest of the pages is up to you; unless you have a thoughtful alternative, we recommend including your best work first.

Submitting the Portfolio

Portfolios should be submitted on T-Square as *both* a zip file and a link:

1. To create the zip file, under the Portfolio tab, choose "Export"
    a. Under "Choose Export Format" select "Leap2A"
    b. Under "What Do You Want to Export" choose "Just Some of My Collections," and check the box next to the collection that includes your portfolio. Uncheck "Include User Feedback"
    c. Click "Generate export"; this should result in an automatic download of a zip file titled something like "mahara-export-html-us-er872-1018735561.zip" (numbers will be different)
    d. Rename the exported zip file to "GTID#.WOVENportfolio" where GTID# is your 9-digit GT ID number (found on your ID card)
    e. Upload the zip-file to the assignment on T-Square
2. To create the link, under the Portfolio tab, choose "Shared by Me"
    a. Next to the collection, click "Secret URL"
    b. Add a secret URL and copy it.
    c. Paste the URL into the textbox on T-Square to be submitted with your zip-file.

Best Practices for Using Mahara

- Compose your text in a word processor for easy editing before placing it in Mahara.
- Ensure that any embedded artifact is legible. For example, the text in PDFs should be easy to read (your reader should not have to zoom in repeatedly).
- Do not include entire artifacts in your self-review essay as a visual or attachment. Instead, highlight a specific page/paragraph/element that you would like to draw attention to for your reader. Use screenshots to draw attention to details in web pages, posters, videos, drafts, etc. Adding a circle or an arrow can help draw attention to a revision you discuss in your reflection. Photoshop, GIMP, or Skitch can help with this.
- Carefully title each artifact. Titling each artifact helps give focus and shows how you are thinking about the artifact's purpose in the portfolio.
- Vary your portfolio pages using the layouts available in Mahara. For images, consider using an image gallery, as opposed to simply embedding images. This gallery makes your portfolio more interactive.
- Make Word documents PDFs, and embed them in the site. Make sure embedded PDFs take up a reasonable amount of space. A PDF in one column of a 3-column layout is impossible to read.
- If embedding or linking to a Google Doc, YouTube video, or other external media, make sure you have the proper permissions set for an outside reader to be able to access your artifact.
- Include all elements of a project on its artifact page.
    - If you wrote an artist's statement to go along with a creative piece, include both the statement and the creative piece. If you had a script or notes for a presentation, don't just provide the PowerPoint; provide all materials. A reflection is not a substitute for either piece.
    - Screenshots are not a sufficient replacement for a full website or social media page, though they may be good for showing a draft. Include a link to the final project instead.

- While an image gallery of screenshots can be a useful way of showing either details or larger context of a physical artifact, any text in an artifact must be visible and readable. If text that is part of a physical display cannot be readily seen in an image gallery, you need to include a transcript or other representation.

- Provide as many "process" documents for your process artifact as possible.
  - If you have multiple drafts or process steps, show all of them instead of picking and choosing among them. Remember that drafts might be in different modes/media than the final product.
  - You are encouraged to show your processes for more than a single artifact.

Troubleshooting

- In general, Firefox is Mahara's preferred browser, with Chrome an acceptable alternative.
- Prezis, PowerPoints, and PDFs may not load properly on a page the first time. Simply refreshing the page usually solves the problem. If you continue to encounter problems, try switching browsers.
- If your zip file is too large to be uploaded to T-Square—which may be the case if you upload a full video file to Mahara--try using a link to YouTube instead of uploading the entire video.
- Mahara is an open-source application with a community of users that work together to provide support and fix problems. For general troubleshooting, you can access the Mahara user manual (https://mahara.org/documentation) and the Mahara community forums, particularly the support forum (https://mahara.org/interaction/forum/index.php?group=1).

Sample Mahara Portfolios

Students from previous semesters have consented for their portfolios to be used as examples; all contain excellent work in terms of both content and design, but these portfolios should not serve as templates to imitate. While you are welcome to look to these for inspiration, making sure your portfolio's content and design reflects your own course and personal development is of utmost importance. The Mahara platform offers large amounts of flexibility; do not feel confined to follow these models. Also, please note that none of these samples include artifact 0 (the multimodal diagnostic video), as this is a new assignment for 2016-2017.

Ha Young Kim, English 1101 with Dr. Patricia Taylor:
https://mahara.gatech.edu/view/view.php?t=2PTVfuNck7lSv9pxGHOy

Danny Griffin, English 1102 with Dr. Michael Griffin:
https://mahara.gatech.edu/view/view.php?t=k6NjrhFKqC8PHdIV0gTQ

Jeremy Feltracco, English 1102 with Dr. Caitlin Kelly:
https://mahara.gatech.edu/view/view.php?t=ShiDznM0O8P6twWeCv71