



## **WRITING TOGETHER, COMPOSING TOGETHER: A [VIRTUAL] GROUP ESSAY**

OSUN Teaching Resources

**William Webb & Erica Kaufman**  
**Bard College Institute for Writing & Thinking**

In groups of 3 or 4, you will compose an essay based on the texts we've worked with in the course so far. Each person in the group will write one or two paragraphs on the topic and the texts considered. You will compose separate pieces of the essay and then bring those pieces together to create a whole. Your first task as a group is to choose the texts you want to work with and then create the question or topic you wish to discuss/examine/pursue.

**Step One:** Once you've been assigned your group, meet online (through chat or video conferencing) to discuss how you want to approach the group essay. One group member should take notes (in a shared document like Google Docs) so that your conversation is available to all as you each begin to write.

The goal of this initial meeting is to determine the texts you'd like to work with and brainstorm what question or topic (thesis) the group will examine through writing the group essay. Each group member should also volunteer for a specific "role" (outlined below).

**Step Two:** Group members work individually on drafting the writing that accompanies their "roles." Group members should determine a deadline or next "meeting" to review their individual writing and share feedback.

### **Suggested Roles:**

*For groups of 4 (involves working with 3 texts):*

1. One person will write on one of the texts chosen.
2. One person will write on another of the texts chosen.

3. One person will write on another of the texts chosen.
4. One person will compare the three texts.
5. Each person will select a visual text to include in the essay (image, video, etc.) and write to make that connection. *The visual sources should be included in the actual essay with appropriate citation information.*

*For groups of 3 (involves working with 2 texts):*

1. One person will write on one of the texts chosen.
2. One person will write on another of the texts chosen.
3. One person will compare the two texts.
4. Each person will select a visual text to include in the essay (image, video, etc.) and write to make that connection. *The visual sources should be included in the actual essay with appropriate citation information.*

**Step Three:** Group members share their writing and comment virtually. Together, you will need to:

- Decide the order of the pieces written.
- Offer suggestions for revision.
- Draft an introduction that introduces the texts and topic chosen.
- Write a conclusion: Is there something unsaid? A final word?
- Give your group essay a title.

**Step Four:** Now that you've completed a draft of your essay, as a group, reread it with an eye towards revision. Each group member should have a revision task. These may include: revising for clarity, adding transitions and revising for "flow," etc.

**Step Five:** Groups share their essays so that the entire class is able to read them.

**Step Six:** *(to be done individually)* Read at least two other group essays and offer a response in the form of a letter to the group. Begin by letting the group know what you enjoyed about their essay—what you think it does well. Offer the group some feedback in the form of questions—what does the essay leave you thinking about? What needs clarifying?

**Step Seven:** *(to be done individually)* Write a reflective response that addresses any of the following:

- What was your experience working in a group to write an essay?
- What did you notice about how your own understanding of the texts and topics changed?
- What did the visual texts add to the essay?

- What did you notice or learn through reading your classmates' group essays? What surprised you?
- If you were to revise your group essay given the feedback you received, what would you do? These responses can either be shared and discussed through a discussion forum, or handed in to the instructor to be assessed.

**Note for faculty:**

Depending on the course and the goals for the assignment, you might choose to offer more guidance regarding the texts students respond to and use in their group essays. You might also opt to offer specific questions or topics for the student groups to choose from.