

# Assignment from College Writing II, Spring 2011

## *The Shallows* Essay (3-4 pages)

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to prompt you to find your own way into an assigned topic, to find personal relevance and interest in what you're writing about.

**Learning Objectives:** you will learn to find and narrow your own areas of inquiry in an assigned topic; develop and support a thesis statement; recognize and develop your own voice, style, and purpose; create a fair argument; synthesize texts; quote correctly and analyze quoted material. You will also continue to practice writing as process, and revising, proofreading, and editing.

**The Task:** You will write a 3-4 page paper in which you make an argument about Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows*. This paper should feature all necessary elements of a formal essay: an introduction with thesis (that is, your argument), well-developed body paragraphs with specific topic sentences and detailed evidence, analysis of your evidence, and a conclusion that "draws a conclusion" about what you've discussed in the paper.

What do you write about? Well, that's up to you. There are a variety of ways to make an argument about Carr's text. Do you want to explore a portion of *The Shallows* in depth, doing a close textual analysis in order to agree or disagree with one of its ideas? Do you want to explore an idea that has come up in our class discussions of Carr's text? Do you want to write about something related—like a movie that this book reminds you of—and refer to Carr more peripherally? Do you want to write a "personal" or creative research paper, focusing mainly on your own experience with the internet? Any of these approaches (and many others) would work, including topics about the use of this book as a common text.

**The basic rules are this:** find some topic suggested to you by Carr's text (even if it's not about the internet), make sure this topic is of interest to you, write an essay in which you make an argument about your topic, supporting it with specific evidence. You must have at least one quote from *The Shallows*, but other than that, use the evidence that will best help you support and explore your argument. Depending on what you've chosen to write about, this evidence may come from your own experience or observations, another text, movie, or TV show, personal interviews, or a variety of places. **Source limits:** Do not make this paper too source heavy—the bulk of the essay should be your ideas and discussion; you should use no more than two outside sources other than Carr, and you can feel free to use only Carr and your own ideas if you want. Also, internet sources must be used with great care—we will discuss in class, but be prepared to avoid unreliable internet sources. Print out and/or bookmark any internet sources you find. We will go over quoting, in-text citing, and works cited pages over the course of the semester.

**Assessment criteria:** This assignment is worth 15% of your overall course grade. Look to the course rubric at the end of the syllabus, but in particular I will be looking for: a sense of interest or curiosity in your writing, a clear sense of your own purpose, a clear, specific, and argumentative thesis statement, paragraphs with clear and specific topic sentences, detailed, relevant evidence, and sustained discussion or analysis of your evidence. I will also expect your argument to be fair.

**Due dates:**

- 2/6 First draft due; bring two copies of your draft, all notes, and any sources used
- 2/15 Final draft due; include first draft and submit to turnitin

## Grading Rubric—College Writing I and II

The following shows what is expected for each level of writing. In general, level 4 corresponds to A work and level 1 corresponds to D or F work. Note: A paper need not show all characteristics of a level to be graded at that level. I grade according to where the paper seems to fit most in terms of its content, organization, style, and grammar.

### 4—Highest Honors/Outstanding Work

Level 4 work is original and insightful; it explores patterns and connections and it is heavily concerned with implications and significance. In addition:

- It is well argued and well organized, with a clear, argumentative thesis
- It is well developed with specific, concrete evidence that the writer uses to support and thoughtfully discuss the thesis
- It has logical and meaningful transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing
- It has few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors
- It demonstrates command of a mature, unpretentious diction
- It uses source material in a mature and meaningful way, and documents the source material correctly

### 3—Basic Honors/Good Work

Level 3 work reflects a command of the material and a strong presentation, but lacks the insight found in Level 4 work. It shares most characteristics of Level 4 work, but:

- It may have some minor weaknesses in its argumentation
- It may have some minor lapses in organization and development
- It may contain some sentence structures that are awkward or ineffective
- It may have minor mechanical, grammatical, or diction problems
- It may be less distinguished in its use of language
- It may use source material in a less mature manner, but it discusses meaning of the material, and it documents the sources correctly

### 2—Adequate Work

Level 2 work is of good overall quality but exhibits a lack of insight as well as either deficiencies in the student's command of the material or problems with presentation. This level work is competent and average. Compared to Level 3 work, it may have a weaker thesis and less effective development. In addition:

- It may have serious shortcomings in its argumentation
- It may contain some lapses in organization
- It may have poor or awkward transitions
- It may have less varied or monotonous sentence structures
- It may have more mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems
- It may have more serious problems with use of source material, such as relying on sources too heavily or not discussing the meaning of quotes; however, it documents the sources correctly

### 1—Unsuccessful Work

Level 1 work corresponds to grades of D or F. A grade of D or F indicates significant problems with the student's work, such as shallow understanding of the material or poor writing. In addition, it exhibits some of all of the following (with an F showing more examples or more problematic examples of these characteristics):

- It presents no clear thesis
- It displays major organizational problems
- It lacks adequate support for its thesis
- It includes irrelevant details
- It includes confusing transitions or lacks transitions altogether
- It fails to fulfill the assignment
- It contains ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences and/or demonstrates problems with spelling, punctuation, diction, or syntax which impedes understanding
- It has serious problems with use and documentation of source materials, including plagiarism

0—Papers will receive a zero if they were intentionally plagiarized or if they were not handed in.