**Field Notebook**

Much of our grammar learning in our first language(s) happens when we are small children. Our families talk to us, and like little scientists, we talk back, testing out our hypotheses about how language works. Sometimes we overgeneralize the rules (so that, for example, the past tense of "go" becomes "go-ed"), but we keep listening and learning, and eventually we understand a lot about how to do many grammatical things quite well.

To more fully understand how grammar works and how to use it effectively, we can also study engage in formal grammar study. The Field Notebook is an opportunity for you to be a language researcher. With a small group, you will analyze the grammatical choices of one published author whose writing is worth emulating. In other assignments for this course, you will also experiment with applying similar choices to your own writing.

**Goals:** The main goals for this project are for you to:

- Notice, name, and explain grammatical forms and functions by collaboratively analyzing and evaluating the grammar of a skilled author.
- Study models of good grammar craft so that you are prepared to apply similar grammar choices in your own writing.

**Audience and Context:** This is a writing-to-learn project, and your teammates and classmates will want to learn with and from you. If you are preparing to teach, you may want to choose an author whose writings you would want to use as mentor texts for your own students. If your main goal is to improve your own writing, you may want to choose an author whose ways with words could serve as a model for your writing.

**Procedures & Requirements:**

1. Create a research team of 3–4 class members and choose the author whose work you wish to study together this semester. Choose a skilled author whose writing is carefully crafted. By Monday, August 29, email me about your proposed study: Whose work do you wish to study? What kinds of writing does/did this author do? How do you intend to use what you learn about grammar from this study, and why is this author a good choice for helping you to meet those goals? (Have one person e-mail me and cc: all teammates, please.)

2. As a team, collect at least six samples of the author’s published writing, preferably in more than one genre. We’ll refer to these samples as *mentor texts.* If some of your samples are books, choose one substantial excerpt per book—and be sure to include enough pages that you’ll be able to analyze at least 750 hundred words at a time. By Wednesday, August 31, create a works cited list in MLA style using the 2009 guidelines. (The References tab on Microsoft Word may be helpful.) As a team, always keep one clean master copy of each of your mentor texts.

3. For each of our units of study (as listed on the back), each team member should bring to class a clean photocopy of one mentor text. You’ll need to be able to write labels and margin notes on this copy, and your team may choose to include it in the finalized Field Notebook. There are advantages and disadvantages to having all team members look either at the same text or at a variety of texts during the same unit; we’ll discuss how to handle this as we go.

4. As we proceed through each unit by reading Kolln & Gray’s book and discussing your completed exercises, carefully study your mentor text for that unit. Beginning with Kolln & Gray chapter 2 (on Friday, September 2), be prepared at all class periods to talk insightfully about how your author uses the grammatical constructs and principles that we are studying. I will direct you about how to **mark, label, and explain in your margin notes** what your author is doing. When your team members notice things that you overlooked, you are encouraged to add their observations to your written annotations.

5. At the end of each unit, choose one team member’s annotated page to include in the Field Notebook. (Each team member should have an equal number of annotated pages in the finished notebook.) That team member is responsible for the following tasks:

   - Write your name and the name of the unit at the top of the page.
   - Ensure that the labels, markings, and margin notes on your page are neat and legible and that they fully represent your team’s analysis and observations for that unit.
   - Type a commentary (at least 100 words) that discusses your team’s findings about the author’s choices in regards to the grammar concepts studied during that unit. What do you notice about the author’s preferences or tendencies for these grammar forms or functions? What does s/he do, and what are the rhetorical effects? Discuss specific examples as you explain the patterns that you notice. (Citing quotations is often an effective way to do this.) Your group may find it helpful to write your commentaries in Google Docs so that all team members can comment on, revise, and edit the pages.
Submit your annotated page and typed commentary to your team for their review, and make revisions as necessary.

Include the annotated page and typed commentary in the team’s Field Notebook.

6. At the end of the term, co-write a preface to your Field Notebook for readers who want to learn more about your author’s grammatical style. (Keep it short—about 500 words.) Give a holistic view (i.e., what you would say about the author’s style when you look at the whole corpus of writing samples), but also use quotations and summaries to as you discuss particularly notable features that appear in some or all of the mentor texts. Help readers to understand what kinds of things they can learn from careful study of this author’s writing.

7. Proofread carefully. Each of your written pages should reflect that you have completed a full-semester study of grammar.

8. Assemble and hand in your Field Notebook: cover page, preface, table of contents, annotated pages with commentaries, and works cited list. It is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, December 7. (Note that this due date has been approved by the college because with the exception of the preface, your work on the project will be completed earlier in the semester.)

Individual Reflection
At class on the due date, you will be asked to write a short and confidential note to me answering the following questions:

• What do you see as the strengths of your Field Notebook? What do you see as areas that need improvement, and why? What changes would you make if you were to do this project again?
• How has your understanding of grammar changed as a result of preparing and discussing the Field Notebook? (Don’t simply tell me that it’s better; tell me what you now understand and how that matters.)
• What would you like me to know about your individual and collaborative work?

Annotated page drafts: It is essential that you bring your annotated pages to each class so that you can discuss your learning with your research team. Each time that you come unprepared for discussion will result in a full-grade reduction from your individual score on the project.

Grading: Your Field Notebook counts for 15% of your final grade. After determining a group grade, I will make any appropriate adjustments to individuals’ scores to reflect their contributions toward a successful project. Decisions about adjusted scores will be informed by group members’ individual reflections and by my observation of and interactions with group members. High-quality Field Notebooks will:

• present the team’s detailed, insightful analysis and evaluation of the grammatical choices made in mentor texts by one author.
• demonstrate a developed and accurate understanding of our course readings and activities.
• show effective organization and attention to detail in carrying out the assignment requirements.
• apply formal conventions for grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Units/topics of study
1. Sentence patterns
2. Verbs
3. Fragments
4. Coordination & subordination
5. Cohesion
6. Sentence rhythm
7. Writer’s voice
8. Adverbials
9. Adjectivals
10. Nominals
11. Stylistic variations
12. Gendered language