

CAT at the GSB

Overview Guide and

Example Assignments

STANFORD

Graduate School of Business



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For other uses please contact Professor Schramm

Welcome to Redesigning the MBA. This document provides an overview of the Critical Analytical Thinking (CAT) course at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. Created and delivered by a cross-disciplinary team of faculty CAT was launched in the fall of 2007 as the centerpiece of the GSB's curriculum revision. With adjustments each year the course is firmly established as a major aspect of how the GSB helps to create principled critical analytical thinkers.

The CAT course is a required 7-week experience, taught in small sections of sixteen students in seminar fashion, led by a tenured faculty member and often supported by an adjunct instructor. The course meets once a week (usually on Friday, but a few sections meet on Thursday evenings) for an hour and 45 minutes. Each week on Wednesday evening students submit a writing assignment (around 1000 words) which is reviewed the faculty for the students' use of logical reasoning and by a professional writing coach for the students' use of effective communicate to present their ideas. In 2010 a team of 13 faculty, 7 adjuncts, and 14 writing coaches staffed 24 sections of CAT to serve the entire first year class of 389 students.

Each faculty member designs which elements they wish to use in delivering the course to their students including: weekly preparation materials, weekly writing assignments, and in-class activities. The faculty members generously share lesson plans, assignments, and materials with one another depositing all course materials on a shared drive, but ultimately each faculty professor chooses what to use with his or her students.

CAT relies on no required text book, though students are directed to a number of print and online resources to support their understanding and application of critical reasoning. A series of notes have been created over the years by different faculty members and these are provided to the students when appropriate to help guide their learning. These include arguments, analogies, use and misuse of evidence.

To support students' writing abilities the school's Mastery in Communication Initiative provides a series of four workshops on the four pillars of the Mastery Approach to Effective Communication (Design, Engage, Refine, and Defend). A short note on "Writing for CAT" is provided along with further web resources students can access as they write their weekly papers.

What's provided in this packet to symposium attendees are drawn from one pair of professors (an emeritus professor of operations and a lecturer in communication). It reflects their collective interpretation of what would best serve their CAT students, and generally mirrors what other faculty provided to their students. The chart on the next page provides an overview of the topics and objectives for each week.

Week No.	Thurs. Date	Topic – learning objectives
1	9/23	<i>Google out of China</i> Problem formulation and deductive arguments.
2	9/30	<i>Who Killed the Electric Car?</i> Further work on deduction and effective structuring of arguments.
3	10/07	<i>Outliers</i> Use and misuse of evidence.
4	10/14	<i>Career Advice</i> Integrating personal experience and outside evidence based on David Brook’s columns.
5	10/21	<i>Toxicity and Race at 20 (1987 to 2007)</i> Correlation vs. causation, strengthening arguments.
	10/28	Midterms. No CAT Seminar or paper.
6	11/04	<i>Persuasion</i> Articulating a contrary position by using critical and analytical thinking.
7	11/11	<i>Team Debate</i> Synthesizing course content through collaboration.

Readers will note the variety of source material for the first five sessions including a traditional MBA case study, a documentary film, a popular business book, New York Times columns, and a research report. In the final two weeks, following the mid-term break, students were free to choose assignment topics with the professors’ approval. Not only did the source material vary, but so did the genre of the weekly writing assignments from a business memo, to an outline, to an academic essay, to an email, to a recommendation report.

What follows are excerpts of the course materials used by Professors Porteus and Schramm to deliver the CAT Course in the fall of 2010 at Stanford. Here readers will find the following:

- Welcome Note (Syllabus).....3
- Weeks 0 and 1 Assignments (Google out of China).....8
- Week 2 (Who Killed the Electric Car or EV1).....11
- Week 3 (Outliers).....12
- Week 4 (Career Advice based on Brooks’ columns).....14
- Week 5 (Toxicity and Race).....15
- Week 6 (Persuasion).....17
- Week 7 (Team Debate).....19
- Writing for CAT Guide.....21

Should you have any questions about the materials contained in this guide, feel free to contact JD Schramm at Stanford’s Graduate School of Business. His contact information is provided at the front of this document.

CAT 2010: Introduction and Welcome Note

Sections 3D and 5D with Evan Porteus and JD Schramm

Welcome to Critical Analytical Thinking! Our primary objective is to give you training, practice, and feedback in the construction, presentation, and critical evaluation of clear, concise, and well-reasoned arguments. Both written and oral presentation is included. These are skills that you will use intensively for the next two years, as well as in your work life. Because you were admitted to the GSB, you probably have some proficiency at these skills. But everyone can improve.

This note describes the course in general and then gives some important ground rules and guidelines to get the most out of the course. Accompanying this introductory note you will also find these documents:

- *Writing for CAT*
- *Honor Code Issues*
- *Arguments*

As the course progresses we will provide a few additional notes for you to read, as well as weekly reading assignments, but there is not a specific text for CAT.

Analysis and Synthesis

The A in CAT stands for *analytical*, a very important adjective for defining the objectives of this course. To analyze something means to break it down and study the pieces; analytical thinking is thinking that looks at matters by studying them a piece at a time, being clear about premises, conclusions, and how each one connects to the others.

Once you take things apart, you have to reassemble the pieces to get back to the conclusion. That is *synthesis*. We preferred the mnemonic CAT to both CAST and CATS, so we left *synthesis* out of the course title. But you'll be engaging in synthesis as well as analysis in this course.

And what about the C for Critical? The word in this context has several connotations; the most important is that you should be skeptical about easy or glib arguments, whether your own or another's. Look at any arguments advanced with the eye of a critic. This includes readings we assign. Just because we assign something for you to read *does not* mean that we endorse it. *The questions we take up during the term rarely have correct answers.* Strong arguments in favor of either "side" of the issue are possible, as are weak ones. The point of CAT is not for you to get the "right" answer, but instead for you to present a strong argument for whichever side you view

as correct. I am likely to have my own take on the issue, but you should not be affected by that. You should instead take the position that you believe is correct.

General Information for Sections 3D and 5D

JD Schramm and I will be jointly teaching you in this course and we hope to have a great experience with you. We seek to make it intellectually stimulating, motivating, and fun. I am your point person in this course. JD will be joining us in our seminars, and will provide input to me on your performance in the course, but I will assign grades, set course policy, determine excused absences, etc.

Our two sections are Section 3D, which meets on Thursdays at 5:30 to 7:00 PM, and Section 5D, which meets on Thursdays at 7:30-9:00 PM. Both sections will meet at my house. I'll send you directions separately. I invite students in both sections to attend an introductory dinner session (also at my house) on Wednesday September 15, 6:30-8:30. A light dinner will be served. We regret that it is not possible to entertain significant others or children at this event: participation is limited to students in our sections, please.

Books and other readings

In addition to the readings in this syllabus package, you will be asked to read substantial portions of the following book:

- Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: the Story of Success*. Little, Brown, and Co. 2008.

Schedule of class sessions/topics

Each week we will have a substantive issue or question of the week, as well as a CAT learning objective. Reserving the right to modify the schedule as we go, here is what is tentatively planned:

Week No.	Thurs. Date	Topic – learning objectives
1	9/23	<i>Google out of China</i> Problem formulation and deductive arguments.
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3	10/07	<i>Outliers</i> Use and misuse of evidence.
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		causation, strengthening arguments.
	10/28	Midterms. No CAT Seminar or paper.
6	11/04	<i>Persuasion</i> Articulating a contrary position by using critical and analytical thinking.
7	11/10*	<i>Team Debate</i> Synthesizing course content through collaboration.

*We're requesting the final class take place on Wednesday 11/10. We will discuss this in the week zero gathering.

Weekly Assignments

Each week you will get the reading and writing assignment for the coming week on CourseWork. For the first two assignments, Week 0 and Week 1, we've included this in the course reader. *Be sure to read this assignment very early in week 0, as you have things to do prior to the introductory dinner session on Wednesday evening.*

The weekly assignment sheet will provide you guidance on what we expect you to read (or view) along with a series of questions you and your study group should discuss *before you begin writing*, as well as the specific writing assignment for the week. Our goal with the study group questions is to stimulate the discussion and support you to frame and develop your own individual response to the assignment.

Writing Styles

The pieces you will write for CAT will be in different formats. In week 1, for instance, you are asked write a memo to the top management of Google. In other weeks, you may be asked to write an essay to me (an academic). You will, of course, want to adapt your writing style to your intended audience. A business memo and an academic essay are not the same thing, and they should be written in different styles. That said, we warn you that we favor writing that (a) uses "section heads" to help guide the logical flow, (b) states conclusions or recommendations up-front and then gives the supporting argument(s), and (c) avoids multiple interpretations by the reader. In other words be structured, clear, and supported. Don't ever choose to be intentionally vague.

Several Specific Ground Rules that Apply to these Two Sections

1. Attendance is mandatory at the Thursday seminar sessions. If you find you must miss a session, you MUST send me an email as soon as you know there is a problem, describing the problem. If I excuse you, it will be without penalty. If I tell you that your absence is unexcused, you will receive a zero for seminar participation that week. Similarly, if you fail

to turn your writing assignment in on time (without being excused by me), you get a zero for that week's writing. If the total number of unexcused absences at the seminar sessions plus missed and unexcused submissions of papers totals 3 or more, you will fail the course.

2. Feedback from your writing coach, Kara Levy does not count toward your grade. However, let me emphasize that this is very valuable. Seize this opportunity and take advantage of what Kara can provide you.
3. My evaluation of your written work will count for 50% of your final grade. More weight will be put on later writing than on earlier writing, but it all counts.
4. My evaluation of your participation in the seminars will count for 50% of your final grade. I reserve the right to cold call in the seminars, and I will exercise that right in particular if you do not participate voluntarily.
5. When it comes to your participation in seminar discussions, I am looking for constructive engagement. For me, this means you are taking your fair share of seminar time making and defending your positions (this includes giving others adequate time also to engage), and, importantly, listening carefully to others, pointing out their statements that can be interpreted in substantively different ways, and, hence, are unclear. A key to making this class a success is to have constructive disagreement, which will mainly consist of challenging your peers when you detect a possible flaw in their logic, you are unconvinced of the strength of the evidence they cite, and/or, similarly, you recognize their use of a premise that you do not accept. In particular, one of my goals here is to help establish a GSB norm of openly disagreeing with peers, but politely and respectfully. A good saying from the negotiation classic, *Getting to Yes*, is to be "hard on the problem but easy on the person." Both properties improve discussions enormously. Students who constructively disagree with others will earn participation credit.
6. Feedback on written work and on seminar participation will be on a 0 to 10 scale.
7. All writing and discussion assignments will be instructor-specific. This will be increasingly true as the term goes on – in the last two weeks, different instructors may have entirely different assignments. This means that **YOU SHOULD NOT RELY ON OTHER STUDENTS FOR THE WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT**, unless they are in your seminar section.
8. Your writing assignment is due at 9 pm on Wednesday, submitted electronically via Coursework. Simply select the assignments link from the left hand side of your CAT Coursework site. Look for the topic and date for the weekly assignment. Click on this link and you will be able to then browse for and upload your document. Please note that the 9 pm deadline is enforced rigidly. If your submission is time-stamped 9:01, it will not be accepted without a compelling excuse. For instance, in a prior year a student was working on his paper until five minutes before the deadline and then went to submit it via a wireless connection, and (he said) lost his connection, and didn't get it back until it was too late. This was not viewed as a "good enough" excuse. Also, students have submitted drafts before the deadline and then, a few minutes after, submitted a draft with what were described as minor

changes. If the changes are minor, it isn't worth getting your instructor angry with you by submitting after the deadline. In general, the last draft you submit before the deadline is what counts. Free advice: If you think and work in terms of, say, an 8:30 pm submission deadline, you'll probably be okay.

9. The name of the file you submit should include your name and the week of the submission (Smith-J-Week-4.docx). *You should also put your name and section in the header or footer of your assignment template so that it is clear which assignment is yours.*
10. Submitting a paper late without an excused absence earns you a zero for that paper. Missing a seminar session without an excused absence earns you a zero for class participation that day. And, to make the punishments worse: If the total number of unexcused absences at the seminar sessions plus missed and unexcused submissions of papers totals 3 or more, you will fail the course.
11. You should submit .doc or .docx documents, readable by MSWord. For the purposes of CAT all faculty and writing coaches will be able to accept both kinds of files.
12. Unless indicated otherwise, your written assignments are limited to not more than 1000 words, excluding footnotes and citations of sources. (See *CAT 2010: Honor Code Issues* for more.) Please use Microsoft Word with double spacing, at least 1½ inch margins on all sides, and 12-point font. (Double spacing gives me room to grade by hand, if I so choose. It is NOT the standard in most "business memo" formats, so in this regard we are deviating from what you will use later in your life.) We are serious about the length limits: Submissions beyond the limit will be truncated at the limit and graded accordingly. You are responsible for checking that you adhere to this limit. (MSWord makes it easy to see how many words you have, in the bottom left of your screen: For .docx documents, under Review/Word Count unclick footnotes, etc.)

Our Relationship with Me as Your Academic Advisor

As your CAT instructor, I am also your academic advisor. Please note the adjective "academic": You can ask me career-related questions, but it isn't clear that I'll be of much use. A GSB Alum will be assigned to you as an informal career mentor and s/he may be in a better position to give valuable answers to such questions. I expect to be a better resource on academics-related questions, although I may not be able to give you a complete answer on the spot. Don't decide before getting to know me that there are some questions that shouldn't be asked without asking them first.

If you wish to speak with me on any matter outside of class, please send me an email first. I check my email frequently and you are more likely to make quick contact with me that way, either to get an answer to a question or schedule a personal meeting. I will contact you about scheduling out of class meetings, where we can get to know each other, and to address academic and other issues. JD and I both look forward to becoming useful resources for you beyond the scope of the CAT course.

CAT 2010 – Assignments for Weeks 0 and 1

Sections with Porteus and Schramm

For the first week in CAT we will look at Google and its operations in China. You will have a rather significant load for this first week so we urge you to start right away. This sheet will outline what you need to read, questions to discuss with your study group, and finally the memo you need to write and submit by Wednesday September 22nd addressing what you think the firm should have done differently to help cause a better outcome.

Reading Assignment for Week 0

Before we meet on Wednesday September 15, please read the following items from your course reader (package):

- *CAT 2010: Introduction Note*
- *CAT 2010: Honor Code Issues*
- *CAT 2010: Guide for Effective Writing*
- *CAT 2010: Arguments*

Reading/Viewing Assignment for Week 1

Begin by reading the following items from your course reader:

- “Google In China” (GSB Case P-54)
- “Google In China (B)” (GSB Case)
- Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits.” From the *New York Times Magazine*.

Access and view the following online:

- Excerpts from Congressional Hearings held on February 15, 2006 (streaming video)

Links (via streaming video) and precise directions on what you should watch will be found on the course website in CourseWork. The 2006 hearings you will view concern general questions about the Internet, China, and four U.S. firms that were operating within China: Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, and Cisco. Google (and the other firms) were coming under heavy pressure to amend their policies regarding services they provide in China.

Preparatory Study Questions

Prior to completing your writing assignment, please discuss the following questions within your study group. There may be a time in class when we will ask what your group concluded on one or more of these questions.

- (1) What are Google's goals? If there are more than one, how does Google handle them? For example, is there just one primary goal, such as maximizing profits, and all other goals are expected to be achieved by focusing exclusively on the primary goal?
- (2) How does Google's mantra of "Don't Be Evil" fit into how it pursues its goals? For example, is this another goal, or is it a constraint on how it achieves its goals?
- (3) To what extent are Google's goals and actions consistent or inconsistent with:
 - (a) Friedman's article?
 - (b) the issues of human rights and morality arising from the Congressional Hearings?

If, at any time, you wish to consult other sources, beyond the required reading, you are welcome to do so. For example, you are welcome to consult Google's website if it is not clear to you from the readings what Google's guiding principles are in making decisions such as entering or leaving China.

Writing Assignment for Week 1

Much has happened in the past five years at Google in terms of its operations in mainland China. The cases provide a chronology of the events up to and including this summer. Senior leaders at Google have asked you to step back and review all that took place, along with material from Milton Friedman and the 2006 Congressional Testimony, to offer a thoughtful, well-reasoned memo answering this question:

What (if anything) should Google have done differently, and at what point in time, to help cause a better outcome for the firm?

While we clearly cannot reverse the clock, the leadership at Google believes that much can be learned for the future by reviewing what took place in the past and an analysis of how doing things differently would have likely resulted in better outcomes for the firm.

Your memo must offer your frank advice on how Google should have proceeded, giving your reasons. As an advisor to Google, you should take the best interests of the company as your objective.

Assume that Google top management is a highly sophisticated audience (which is certainly true) and has read and understands (which doesn't mean, agrees with) all of your assigned reading. (If you bring other sources into your arguments, you should explain what those sources say.) Also assume that what you write will be used internally by Google, but will not see the (general) light of day.

Be sure to follow the instructions in the *Introduction Note* on the maximum length (800 words), margin sizes, font size, etc. Please remember that your memos must be uploaded by 9:00 pm on Wednesday, September 22 to the CourseWork website. In the seminar on Thursday evening, we will discuss your recommendations and arguments. Please come prepared to make a short (no more than three minutes) oral presentation of your recommendation and argument.

CAT 2010 – Assignment for Session 2 Demise of the Electric Car Porteus/Schramm Sections 3D and 5D

Required Reading

(Mis)Using Evidence, teaching note available on CourseWork.

Required Viewing

A DVD copy of the film *Who Killed the Electric Car?* is included in your syllabus. Some of the film's content, including a useful timeline, is summarized on the following website:

<http://www.sonyclassics.com/whokilledtheelectriccar/electric.html>. An alternative version of the timeline can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/223/electric-car-timeline.html>.

Required Additional Outside Research

Do a search on the web and identify the title, author, and link for (at least) one web source (other than those listed above, which give more than just the timeline) that presents evidence that is not included in the DVD and sheds additional light on an important issue raised in the DVD. For example, you might find evidence that either contradicts or supports an assertion made in the DVD.

Preparatory Study Questions

Prior to completing your writing assignment, please discuss the following questions within your study group. There may be a time in class when we will ask what your group concluded on one or both of these questions.

(1) What is the role that the government (and its agencies) should play in situations like this (new technologies with the possibility of creating public goods)?

(2) (Closely related to the first question) What is the role that private companies and markets should play in situations like this?

Writing Assignment

You are a consultant advising Arnold Schwarzenegger, who as Governor of California, is considering ways to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in California. You have been given a narrowly defined task, namely, ***“What, if anything, should the government have done in 2003 to increase the penetration of Electric Vehicles?”***

He has seen the DVD and wants clear and compelling answers from you to this question so that his staff will be properly prepared to prepare appropriate policies and legislation in the future.

Write a cohesive memo (of no more than 800 words with the usual formatting) that answers the question the governor has asked of you.

CAT Sections 3D and 5D (Porteus and Schramm)

Assignment for Week 3: *Outliers*

Reading Assignment

Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*. Please read the Introduction and Chapters 1 through 5 (up to p.158).

This week's assignment focuses on drawing conclusions from empirical evidence. Only the introduction and the first five chapters of *Outliers* are assigned, so you may assume that the book ends there, for purposes of the assignment below. However, if you are intrigued enough to read more, you may do so. However, if you do, please include at the start of your paper a footnote saying how far you read, because the additional reading may appropriately change what you write.

In contrast to your last assignment (on Electric Vehicles), we want you to do this assignment without looking up outside sources that may, at least in part, provide analysis of *Outliers*, including its conclusions and the evidence presented to support those conclusions. You may, if you wish, look up the research studies that Gladwell cites in the book, to assess whether he properly interprets and reports on them, but you may also, if you wish, accept Gladwell's descriptions of those studies as being accurate.

Preparatory Study Group Discussion

Prior to completing your writing assignment, please discuss the following questions within your study group. There may be a time in class when we will ask what your group concluded on one or both of these questions.

Pick an organization in which at least one of you have worked in the past, or one you know well. A member of the top management of that organization recently read *Outliers* and is a big fan of the book. S/he has asked you to make a significant recommendation that is aimed at helping the organization better meet its goals and that is based on your reading of *Outliers*. Identify one or more such recommendations, discuss how they follow from the evidence presented in the book, and discuss why they would help the organization better meet its goals. (You are also welcome to discuss the merits, or lack thereof, of requiring you to have this discussion.)

Writing Assignment Due Wednesday October 6

Write an essay (not a memo) of no more than 800 words. Consider your audience to be the members of your CAT section and faculty. Your essay should be a coherent and cohesive document that addresses all of the following four components:

- (1) Identify and articulate Gladwell's most important conclusions.
- (2) Evaluate Gladwell's arguments in support of each of these conclusions.
- (3) Identify one or two important conclusions of your own (different from Gladwell's) that are useful and supported by the evidence presented by Gladwell.
- (4) Argue why the evidence in Gladwell supports your conclusion(s).

If you refer to material from the book, do so briefly (e.g., "the Canadian hockey example, p. 15ff") without a full citation. If you use any other source related to the book or to the topic at hand, you must fully cite it, but remember that for the first two components of the assignment, we are looking for your critique of the book (and its conclusions) and not your report on other critiques of the book.

Be sure to follow the instructions in the *Introduction Note* on the maximum length (800 words), margin sizes, font size, etc. Please remember that your memos must be uploaded by 9:00 pm on Wednesday, October 6 to the CourseWork website.

Assignment for Thursday October 7, before Class

You will receive, by email, on (or before) Thursday morning, an essay submitted by one other classmate. Please read that essay before class and prepare your initial impression feedback. The person who wrote that essay will be asked to present it, as well as possible in three minutes in class, to you (and possibly others). You will then give feedback on both the written essay and the verbal presentation. The objective of this assignment is to facilitate your ability to give deeper feedback and enable you to receive deeper feedback from a peer.

Peer Critique Email Due Sunday October 10

Prepare a critique, containing your best feedback, of the essay you were emailed and began to critique in class. Write no more than 400 words. Email your feedback to the author of the essay by midnight Sunday, October 10, and copy both Evan and JD on your email. Your audience for this email is your peer, the author of the essay. Provide actionable feedback. The goal of this assignment is to further develop your ability to give deep feedback on written arguments. It also enables you to receive written feedback from a peer as well as your instructors and your writing coach, in preparation for (possibly) rewriting your essay.

Optional Writing Revision Due Between Tuesday October 12 and Sunday October 24

You may, if you wish, rewrite your essay submitted for this assignment. Your revision will be graded, feedback will be provided, and submitting it gives you the opportunity to improve your grade on this assignment. If you choose to do so, you must submit it electronically to the CourseWork website between 9:00 pm on Tuesday, October 12 and midnight Sunday, October 24. The goal of this assignment is help you improve your written arguments, using a wealth of feedback.

CAT 2010 – Assignment for Week 4

Career Advice

Porteus/Schramm Sections 3D and 5D

Required Reading (in your Course Reader)

David Brooks, “In Praise of Dullness,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 2009.

David Brooks, “The Sandra Bullock Trade,” *The New York Times*, March 29, 2010.

Preparatory Study Questions

Prior to completing your writing assignment, please discuss the following questions within your study group. There may be a time in class when we will ask what your group concluded on one or both of these questions.

- (1) What relevance are the two op-ed pieces by David Brooks to giving career advice?
- (2) To what extent are your personal life experiences consistent (or inconsistent) with the points raised in these two op-ed pieces?

Writing Assignment

You have a cousin (or close relative) who is a very bright sophomore at a prestigious university, but hasn't decided on a major yet. She (you can select the gender to be male if you wish) has confided with you in the past that she wishes to make a ton of money in a professional business career. She recently read the two attached op-ed pieces by David Brooks in *The New York Times* and contacted you for advice. She has expressed confusion about whether the contents of these articles should influence how she goes about her studies, activities, and goals. She admires you and your accomplishments and will be influenced by your discussing the ways in which your advice corresponds (or does not) to your approach to your career.

Your task is to write an email of no more than 500 words that gives her the best and most persuasive advice you can muster regarding her career dilemma. (Other than the word limit, the rest of the formatting requirements prescribed in the *Introduction Note* must be followed.) You know that she will be swayed by compelling evidence and a logical argument. You may, if you wish, suggest additional material to her if it will help strengthen your advice.

CAT 2010 – Assignment for Session 5

Toxic Wastes and Race

Porteus/Schramm Sections 3D and 5D

Reading Assignment

Bullard, R.D., P. Mohai, R. Saha, and B. Wright, *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987-2007*, United Church of Christ, March 2007. See the Appendix on the reverse side for which selected parts of the original have been included in the pdf document found on the CAT CourseWork site and which portions of it to read most carefully.

Preparatory Study Group Discussion

Prior to completing your writing assignment, please discuss the following questions within your study group. There may be a time in class when we will ask what your group concluded on one or both of these questions.

- (1) What are the goals of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ) in publishing this report?
- (2) What has the CRJ convincingly established in this report?
- (3) What has the CRJ not convincingly established in this report and that would be important in appealing to a much wider audience?
- (4) Do you believe any aspects of this report are objectionable to significant portions of the American public? If so, why?

Written Assignment

After releasing this report, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ) developed a concern that it did not effectively deliver its message to a sufficiently wide audience. There seems to be little doubt among its traditional constituency that the report confirms that, among residential areas in the United States, those close to hazardous waste facilities have a significantly higher percentage of people of color in them than do others. But the report has not spawned significant new interest, as did the 1987 report, in supporting the environmental justice movement. You have been hired as a consultant to the CRJ to help in this regard. One persistent objection heard is that the report does not study whether, at the time that these facilities were established, racism played a significant role. That is, were these facilities built in areas that were disproportionately populated by people of color or were there other factors that explain the location decisions?

Write a memo of no more than 800 words. Consider your audience to be the leaders of the CRJ. Your memo should be a coherent and cohesive document that addresses both of the following two components:

- (1) Recommend important ways to improve the effectiveness of the current report in getting its message out to a much wider audience.
- (2) Identify the components of a study that uses data to test the persistent objection and that the CRJ could commission.

Follow the usual rules on spacing, font size, and margins, and the usual deadline for uploading (on the CAT CourseWork site).

Appendix: Selected Parts of *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987-2007*.

The original 175-page report can be found at <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/toxic20.pdf>. You are welcome to access it and read more from it if you wish. To help focus the assignment and to reduce the reading burden, many of the report's pages have been deleted, so that the version that appears on the course website has 85 pages, 19 of which are appendices of Chapters 3 and 4 and are not required reading. Of the remaining 66 pages, we recommend that you concentrate on the 6 page Executive Summary and the bodies of Chapters 3 (9 pages), 4 (16 pages), and 8 (9 pages).

CAT 2010 – Assignment for Session 6

Persuasion

Porteus/Schramm Sections 3D and 5D

Overview

There are two purposes of this assignment. The first is to deepen your ability to develop and present persuasive arguments by having you dig deeply into the argument on the other side. The second is to expand our discussion to different ways in which persuasion can be used, including arguments that are not perfectly logical and are not fully justified by unbiased evidence. We want to understand what they are, how effective they are, and, if they are devious and/or misleading, to develop an awareness and resistance to them.

We will work with what elected officials commonly call a position paper. It's used to understand the other side of an issue more fully so you can argue against it. You will choose an issue for which you have a strongly held position and write an argument supporting the opposite side. Your goal is to persuasively present the opposite side using any techniques of persuasion. While we ask you to be ethical (don't invent data or outright lie) you are not restricted only to rational, logical arguments as we've used in CAT thus far.

Selection and Approval of Assignment

For this week you will select all of the following:

1. Topic – select something substantive and worthy of discussion
2. Your Position – articulate your strongly held position briefly
3. Position You Will Present – articulate the position with which you disagree
4. Audience – determine who you will be trying to persuade
5. Genre – select whether you will write a memo, an essay, an op-ed piece, etc.

To assure that your issue and conclusion are substantive and pertinent to the class, you must email us those five items above (eporteus@stanford.edu and jschramm@stanford.edu) by **9PM Wednesday Oct. 27**. We will email back to you by 9PM Thursday Oct. 28 with either approval of your proposal or suggestions for changes. If any changes are requested, you must reply by email with a new proposal by 9PM Sunday Oct. 30. We will get back to you by 9PM Monday Nov. 1 with either approval or a restatement of your proposal that you must adopt. We recommend that you pick a provocative issue, but not so controversial that some of your classmates may not be able to rationally discuss it.

Writing Assignment (Two Parts)

Part One. This part of the assignment consists of the written version of your persuasive argument. As usual, it should total no more than 800 words, with the usual spacing and formatting and the usual submission requirements (on the CAT CourseWork site).

Part Two. In addition to your 800 word assignment in Part One, please prepare a separate one-page of “talking points” to help guide you in making your persuasive argument orally in class. Please use Microsoft Word and submit it on the CAT CourseWork site, to facilitate our putting it into a packet to be distributed to your peers. (It will not be graded.) You can use a variety of approaches to this:

- Bullet points
- Outline
- Executive Summary
- Something else...

Assignment for Thursday November 4, before Class

You will receive, by email, on (or before) Thursday morning, a packet of all of the one-page talking points submitted by your classmates. Please read them before class, so that you will be able to more effectively discuss the issues selected and to give high impact feedback.

CAT 2010 – Assignment for Session 7

Group Debate

Porteus/Schramm Sections 3D and 5D

Overview

Your final CAT project involves three stages that will lead to a written group assignment and two group debates in class. It allows those of you who wish to do so to dig deeper into an issue that you have already addressed at a more superficial level. It also facilitates the process of analyzing other arguments and finding their weaknesses. It emphasizes oral communication more than our other assignments.

Stage One

Select a topic that is acceptable to your study group (SG) and to another SG within your CAT section. Your two groups (your SG and the opposing SG) will argue opposite sides of the topic for half the class and the other two groups will argue with each other for the other half of class. While the topic will be selected by you, it will go through a process of vetting by us. There are two reasons for this: First, we hope and expect it to improve your project. Second, there are obvious externalities (such as duplicate topics) that call for some coordination. As with the Assignment for Week 6, we recommend that you pick a provocative issue, but not so controversial that some of your classmates may not be able to rationally discuss it.

Once both groups agree on a topic and the opposing positions, your SG and the opposing SG should submit to us a joint project abstract. The abstract should be a Word file attachment no longer than 250 words that includes the following two things:

- (1) Identify the topic you are planning to address and elaborate on it for a paragraph.
- (2) Identify the two opposing positions (one paragraph each) and which SGs will take which positions.

It should be emailed to us (at eporteus@stanford.edu and jschramm@stanford.edu) by **9PM Wednesday Oct. 27**. We will comment on your abstract and we may iterate in a process that should result in a final abstract. If you have questions, doubts or issues that arise as you contemplate a topic, you may be better off submitting your abstract earlier, but that's up to you. (We'll be happy to answer any questions you have before you submit the abstract.) Needless to say, all of this involves collaboration between your SG and the opposing SG. Once the abstract is approved, each SG will work independently.

If you have any remaining questions or doubts or are otherwise seeking advice, please do that in the body of the email when you submit your abstract. If there are two candidate topics that both SGs agree on and you have a hard time deciding between them, please send us two abstracts and we'll comment on both.

Stage Two

The final paper will be a group-written essay directed to your CAT classmates and professors, limited as usual to 800 words, with the usual spacing and formatting, and submitted through CourseWork by the usual deadline, namely 9:00 PM on Wednesday, November 10. We will send out copies of all four submissions for your section to you as soon after that as we can. You will not get extensive feedback on this from Kara.

You may recall that JD will not be able to participate in class this week. However, he will make himself available for coaching study groups on Nov. 9 and 10 to help your group prepare for your debate. Please sign up to work with him during one of the time slots that will be identified on Coursework.

We ask that you pay careful attention this week that your introduction (your first 150 to 200 words) does the following:

- Engages the audience
- States the position you are taking
- Previews the major elements of the argument

Stage Three

Once you submit your paper, you should review both the opposing SG's paper and the other two papers. (Plan to make the time to read the other submissions and get together with your SG during the time from Wednesday night to seminar time on Thursday.) Your SG should prepare for class discussion the argument in support of your position and a rebuttal of the opposing SG's position. Please prepare a separate single page of "talking points" (in whatever format, such as bullet points, that your team selects) to help guide you in making your arguments orally in class. **Please bring two paper copies of it to class for us plus as many as you need for your SG.** In addition, you should be prepared to question and comment on the topic of the other two SGs within your CAT section.

Critical Analytical Thinking – 2010 Guide for Effective Writing

CAT is not a writing course. It's a seminar experience in thinking critically, but your ability to write effectively will play a major role in your success not only in CAT, but throughout your MBA and career. Your writing will often be the place where people first encounter you and your ideas. Quite often your writing will travel much further in an organization than you do. Just as the business world might first encounter your ideas through your writing, so will your CAT professor. Your ideas and logic will be read and analyzed before you even have the opportunity to orally present and defend that position.

The Mastery in Communication Initiative provides writing coaches and resources to help you master the written presentation of your logical arguments. We focus our work on the two foundational pillars of all effective written communication: structural design and audience engagement. We created this brief guide to help you approach the rigorous level of writing required each week in CAT. We'll cover the Mastery Approach to Effective Writing and provide an Overview of the resources we provide to support your writing.

The Mastery Approach to Effective Writing

You can motivate your readers' confidence in you by focusing on the three core elements of our approach: **Design, Engage, Refine**¹. This framework should help you conceptualize all written communication (not just CAT papers) as an outcome of these three specific actions. The approach was developed inside of business organizations by one of our writing coaches, and once you understand and internalize this framework your ability to communicate in all relevant arenas of business will improve.

Design Your Position: *Is there a clear message frame, structure and support?* Start with an informative, clear, and interesting title. Then answer the specific question(s) posed and make use of any assigned reading. Next, preview the thesis and the main points of the supporting argument in the first few paragraphs. Use headers and paragraphs with clear topic and transition sentences to guide the reader from point to point of the previewed argument, providing supportive details for each point and close with strength and clarity.

Engage Your Audience: *Is the language and style relevant and resonant?*

Choose language that is appropriate for the audience and relevant for the topic at hand. Emphasize active (not passive) voice and action verbs. Select precise words and concise sentence structures free of unnecessary preambles or qualifiers.

Refine Your Mechanics: *Is the copy clean? Did you answer the given question?*

Attend to the mechanics of your writing. Employ the requested genre and format, and use correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and proper citation. Name and submit the document in the protocol required by your professor.

¹ Your writing coach will provide you a single page overview of our approach. It further contains a fourth aspect, Defend, which includes some of the oral communication skills crucial for success in CAT seminars.

Ultimately Effective Writing:

- Conveys a strong message
- Answers a specific question
- Presents a clear and specific position
- Presents relevant supportive details
- Underscores information in a logical and manageable sequence
- Organizes information logically and in manageable sequence
- Engages the audience with language that is both clear and creative

These seven traits are explained more fully in the weekly seminars and online resources noted below. We hope they will become second nature to you as you write.

Solid Writing Reflects Solid Thinking

The structure of your argument will most likely become the organizational structure of your written work. As you invest more time in the writing process, you will also be clarifying and synthesizing your thinking on the topic of the week, and exercising your critical analytical reasoning skills in a structured process. On the other hand, if you dash off a three-page memo an hour before the weekly deadline, your thinking and writing will likely be shallow, and this will be reflected in your weekly CAT session participation. One professor aptly dubbed the weekly writing assignments as the “admission ticket” to a great CAT section discussion. The more solid your admission ticket, the more comfortable and successful you will be in your weekly CAT discussion sessions.

Mastery Writing Resources

The Mastery in Communication Initiative at the GSB offers comprehensive resources to support your ability to communicate effectively in writing. The extent to which you will benefit from these resources depends on your level of engagement with the resources, starting with your anchor communication resource in CAT, your writing coach.

Your Professional Writing Coach

Employers continually say that the factor that most distinguishes and differentiates among talented candidates, is each candidate’s ability to communicate effectively. To address this we use a coaching model as the best approach to help our richly diverse student body create a launch pad to develop their communication skills. In your professional writing coach, you will find a resource of tremendous value to support you on an individual level to develop your writing skills. Our coaches are a team of communication experts, many of whom have organizational management and leadership experience, and all of whom have direct experience helping writers at all levels of proficiency improve their ability to communicate in writing.

Prior Students Speak: Getting the Most Out of Coaching

To benefit from the CAT coaching experience, get to know your coach early in the process. Share your hopes and challenges with your coach so he or she can best help you achieve your goals in this course, and work together on strategies to help you break through any past setbacks in writing. Past CAT students have found these strategies helpful in getting the most out of the coaching relationship:

1. ***Read the feedback at least twice.*** Read it when it first arrives and then read it again, immediately before you begin drafting the next week's assignment. Pay attention to the goals your coach outlines and strive to accomplish them the next week. *Confirm understanding.* Ask your coach if there are comments that you don't understand.
1. ***Arrange time to see or speak with your coach.*** All coaches, regardless of their geographic location, are available to you on an individual basis. E-mail your coach and arrange a time when the two of you can discuss your writing in greater depth. This course goes very fast; try and meet your coach by the end of week two.
1. ***Attend the Written and Oral Communication Seminars.*** These weekly sessions are a great way to learn more about writing before you tackle the next assignment.
2. ***Attempt at least one early draft review with your coach.*** Early draft reviews allow a student to get coach input on the primary areas that need to be strengthened before papers are submitted for scoring by the professor. Early draft reviews are completed on a first-come, first-serve basis only, and you must first check with your professor and your coach to see if this service is available in your particular sections.
3. ***Balance divergent professor/coach opinions.*** The sharpest papers will be those that are *both* well-reasoned *and* effectively presented. But it could happen that your coach's feedback and your professor's comments seem out-of-synch. Admittedly your professor and your coach are looking at different aspects. If this happens, we urge you to chat with your professor and coach about what you are experiencing. Review and clarify any discrepancy before you write your next assignment.
4. ***Embrace the Process.*** Making strides in your writing as an MBA is like increasing lung capacity for a mountain climber. You will feel the benefit in every breath you take, (or every word you write). Writing effectively is clearly the one skill where you can really differentiate yourself.
5. ***Seek Guidance from your Professor.*** With 13 different professors teaching CAT, it's impossible to directly guide each MBA student in how to specifically approach writing each week. We suggest you ask your professor what's most important in your section. One CAT professor shared:

I think the important thing to communicate to students is that a clear, concise, logical, and organized rendering of their argument will be what determines the grade they get from the professor and this is what their primary focus should be.

Optional Communication Seminars

Starting on Tuesday September 28 we will hold weekly seminars each Tuesday at 10:30 am and 3:30 pm. The same content is repeated twice each day so that students from all six sections have the chance to participate. Visit the Mastery in Communication website for seminar details and to register.

Digital Resources

You will find additional resources in the ***Written Communication***, and ***Resources*** areas of the Mastery in Communication website to help you develop your writing. Some of the highlights you will find there include:

The Online Writing Lab at Purdue (OWL). This is a great resource that will help you with grammar, punctuation, and structure issues. OWL is easy to navigate and covers a variety of writing issues many graduate students and professionals encounter on a regular basis.

Re: Writing (Bedford/St. Martins). A one-stop shop for writers who want everything from diagnostics and grammar exercises, to model document samples, tutorials on avoiding plagiarism, and more. One of the best collections of Web resources to help you with foundational writing issues. All resources are free, open, easy to access, and of high quality.

The Chicago Manual of Style Online. CAT professors have agreed to use *Chicago* as the official CAT style guide for questions regarding citation and other writing matters. The GSB has secured a license for all students to use this resource at no cost. If you have trouble accessing the site when not on campus, contact the IT Helpdesk.

Differentiate Yourself by Writing Effectively

The degree to which you develop your communication abilities inside the seven sessions of the CAT course is entirely up to you. We are pleased to be able to provide you with a wide variety of support and resources to dramatically improve your ability to present and defend your well-reasoned positions in class and beyond. How you elect to use all the resources is up to you. Past students who took full advantage of what was provided saw the greatest benefit.

To learn more we urge you to contact the writing coach assigned to your CAT section. You may also wish to visit <http://gsbmastery.stanford.edu> or email JD Schramm, Director of the Mastery in Communication Initiative at schramm_jd@gsb.stanford.edu. We look forward to working with you in the CAT course and throughout your two years here.