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# MECH ENG 200: Writing the 500 word paper

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**Roger Graves**

Professor, English and Film Studies

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/>

# Roger Graves



## Roger Graves

Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
Professor, EFS

February 13, 2009

- wac
- c4w
- writing initiatives
- webmail
- efs

I'm new to the University of Alberta, having come from the University of Western Ontario where I was Director of the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In my new position here I'll be working with faculty and students across the university as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of five books and 29 articles, including *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-Vice-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) and a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian

### Recent presentations

This page contains links to pdfs of slides displayed at presentations I've given.

### Books

This page displays the covers and descriptions of books I've authored, co-authored, or co-edited



### Blog: Thinking About Writing

A new blog on writing-related issues

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>

# Centre for Writers



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Centre for Writers at the University of Alberta. The header features the University of Alberta logo, the text "Writing Initiatives University of Alberta", and the "Centre for Writers" logo. A navigation menu includes links for Home, Appointments, Contact Us, Location, Coaches, Resources, FAQ, and WAC. The main content area has a breadcrumb "Home > Home" and a "Welcome to the Centre for Writers" section. This section states that free one-on-one writing coaching is available to all students, instructors, and staff. It lists the types of writing projects that can be assisted, such as theses, essays, and lab reports. A link to "Request a class room visit by a tutor" is provided. A welcome message for the Fall 2009 term is also present. On the right side, there are sections for "Express News" (dated 9/2/2009 10:34:15 AM), "Twitter Updates" (with a tweet about the fall term opening on September 14), and "GramWOW" (with a video player showing a person holding a sign).

 *Writing Initiatives*  
University of Alberta  *Centre for Writers*

[Home](#) [Appointments](#) [Contact Us](#) [Location](#) [Coaches](#) [Resources](#) [FAQ](#) [WAC](#)

[Home](#) > Home

## Welcome to the Centre for Writers

We offer **free** one-on-one writing coaching and support to all students, instructors and staff at the University of Alberta - in any faculty or at any level of study.

Our writing coaches are available to assist clients with higher order concerns in their writing, such as thesis formation, organization and idea development, as well as more specific details, like grammar and documentation style. Clients can bring in any writing project at any stage of development: essays, lab reports, creative pieces, scholarly articles, thesis drafts, application letters - and more. Our coaches will also help students read instructor comments on already-graded papers. ESL and EAL students are welcome!

[Request a class room visit by a tutor.](#)

**Welcome back for the Fall 2009 term! Tutoring hours will begin on Monday, September 14. The online appointment-booking schedule will be available to clients as soon as possible prior to this date. We look forward to working with you!**

9/2/2009 10:34:15 AM

**Express News**

**Twitter Updates**

The Centre for Writers will open for the fall term on Monday, September 14! 5 days ago

[follow me on Twitter](#)

**GramWOW**



<http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>

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# Communication/Technical Skills

No matter how many technical skills you have, you still need to deal with people at a level they can understand, so communication skills are just as important as technical skills.

Paula Anthony, Industry technical support team leader

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# Earnings and English



A study reported in *Fortune* magazine showed that the top quartile in university studies earned **three times** what the bottom quartile earned in their lifetimes.

The best communicators among you will earn millions more over your lifetimes than the least effective communicators.

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# Genres

As you move through your career at U of A you will need to learn new genres

- Engineering genres:  
presentations, abstracts, reports
  - Genres in course electives often include:  
essays, reflections, summaries, annotated  
bibliographies
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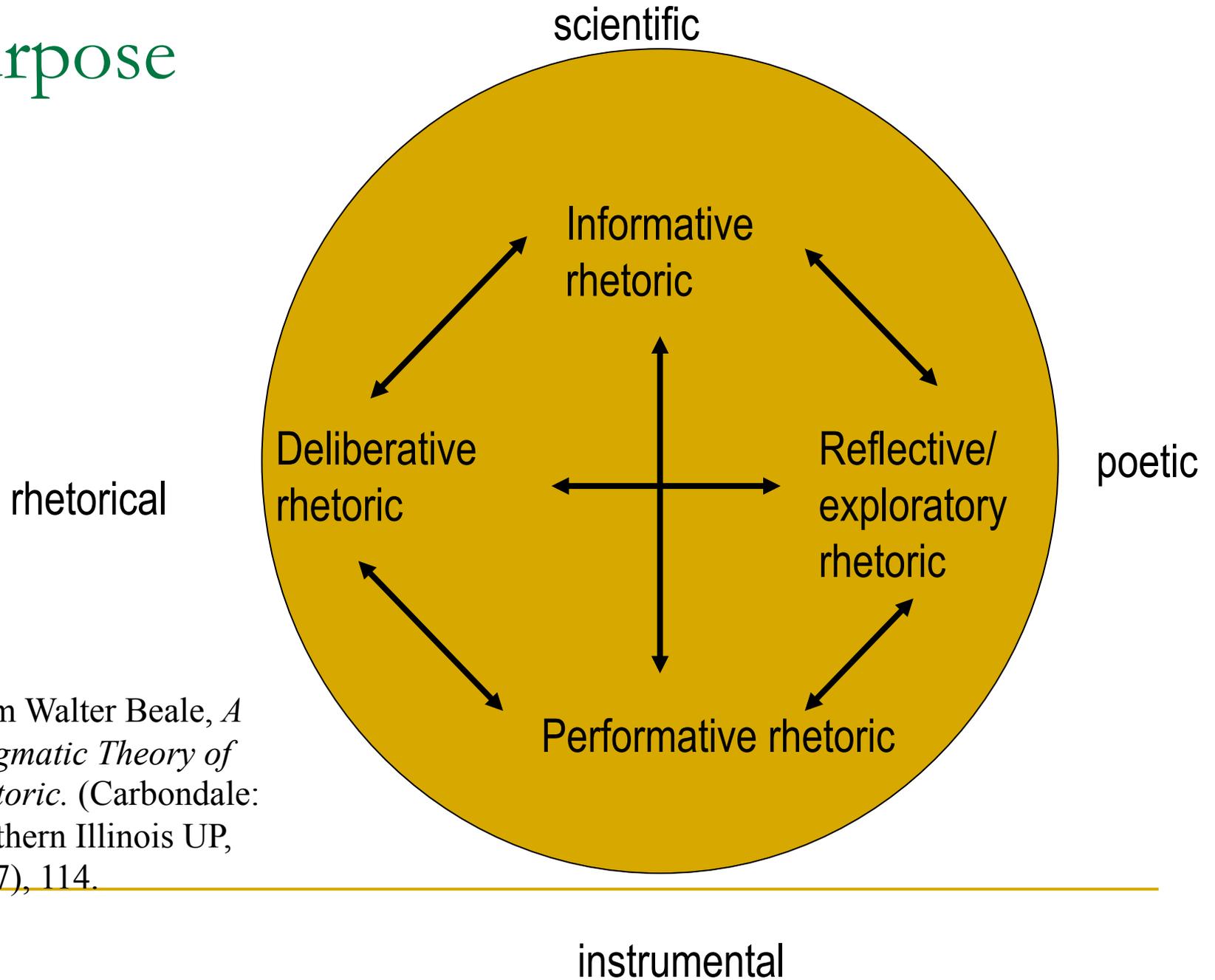
# Audiences

You will need to learn to write for distinctly different audiences:

- Co-workers in co-op placements
- Engineering professors
- Professors in elective courses
- Job search documents



# Purpose



From Walter Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), 114.

# Purpose: The circular model

- Highlights the dual purposes of discourse
- A piece of writing can both persuade and inform (e.g. newspaper report on school lunches)
- Any piece of writing has at least two aims
- E.g Your resume
  - Informative and persuasive

ExpressNews [Home](#)

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EVENTS

**Oct 19, 2009**  
[Sustainability Awareness  
Week 2009](#)

[Athabasca University,  
Open Access Week](#)

[ECOS' Free Bike Checks](#)

[Teach English In Japan  
\(JET\) Info Sessions](#)

[The heterodonty of  
Tyrannosaurids:  
Biomechanical implications  
inferred through 3D  
models](#)

## Students stand up to make a difference

By Ielrean Poon

October 16, 2009 - (Edmonton) The University of Alberta quad was jumping this afternoon as students, staff, faculty and members of the Edmonton community came out to take part in Stand Up Against Poverty.



The annual event is designed to raise awareness of global poverty issues and to connect student groups with each other, as well as with researchers and community groups who are taking action against economic disparity. Students' Union president Kory Mathewson told the crowd that it's up to them to make a difference in

University of Alberta students gathered in quad to take a stand against global poverty.

[Print story](#) | [Email story](#)

[Video coverage of  
Stand Up Against Poverty](#)

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## 5 Factors affecting success as a writer

1. Flexibility of your **writing processes**
  2. Ability to get **feedback** on drafts
  3. Familiarity with the **genre**, complexity of the genre
  4. Complexity of the task (**purpose**):  
description is less complex than analysis/  
synthesis
  5. Number of **audiences**/readers, diversity  
within these groups
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# Success in this course

1. **writing processes**—worksheets (**planned for**);  
**Workshops 1 & 3**
  2. **feedback** on drafts—Abstract feedback template, C4W (**available, planned for**); **Workshop 4**
  3. Familiarity with the **genre**—how many of these have you written this term? (**unknown**)
  4. Complexity of the task (**purpose**): analysis/synthesis is at top end of reasoning skills (**difficult**); **Workshop 2**
  5. **audiences/readers**—instructor (**relatively easy**)
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# Academic writing for engineering students

- Technical engineering documents
  - Email to peers, professors, staff
  - Job application materials
  - Essays for non-engineering courses
  - Lab reports for science courses
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# Audience and Purpose

- Understand your audience for a piece of writing
  - Understand your purpose for a piece of writing
  - The better you understand your audience and purpose, the better your document will accomplish your goals
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## 500 word essay

- Who is your **audience** for the 500 word paper?  
Describe this reader.
  - What is your **purpose**?  
“**convince the reader that the application of this ethical theory would prevent future occurrences of this kind**” [would prevent disagreements health care; would prevent misunderstandings water use in Alberta]
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# Drafting the paper

## **Water as a commodity for:**

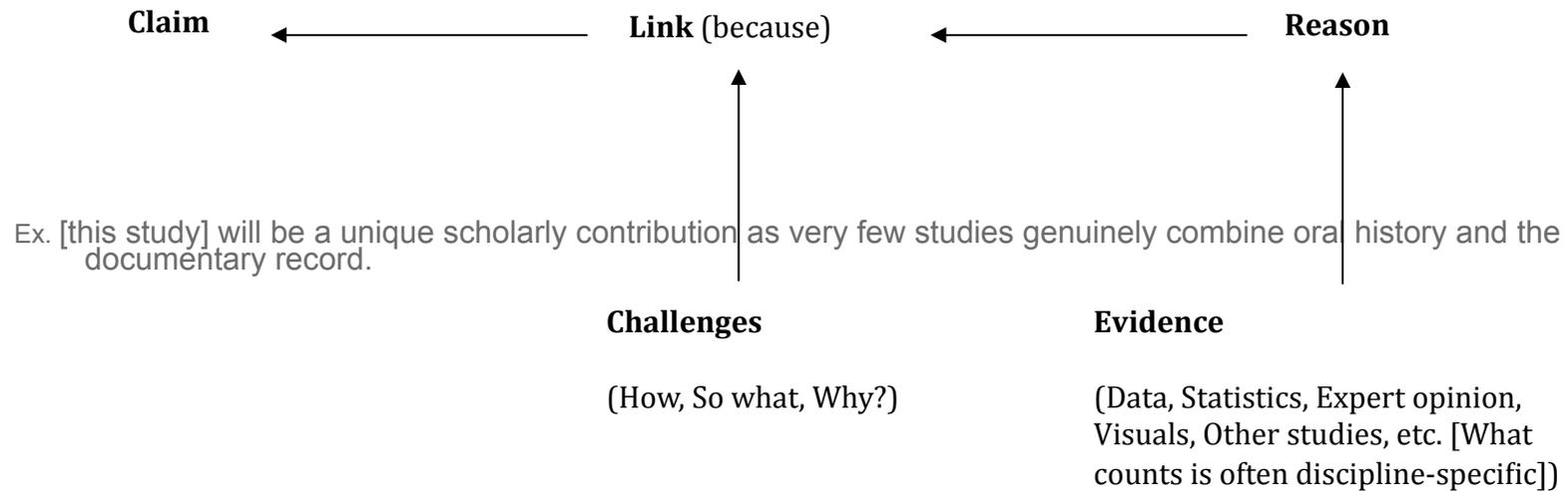
- Utilitarian argument (Mill) suggests that the greater good for society would be served by thinking of water as a commodity that can be bought and sold

## **Or against:**

- Overall environmental stewardship is more important than profit—Kant argues that the acts that lead to results are just as important to creating a moral society
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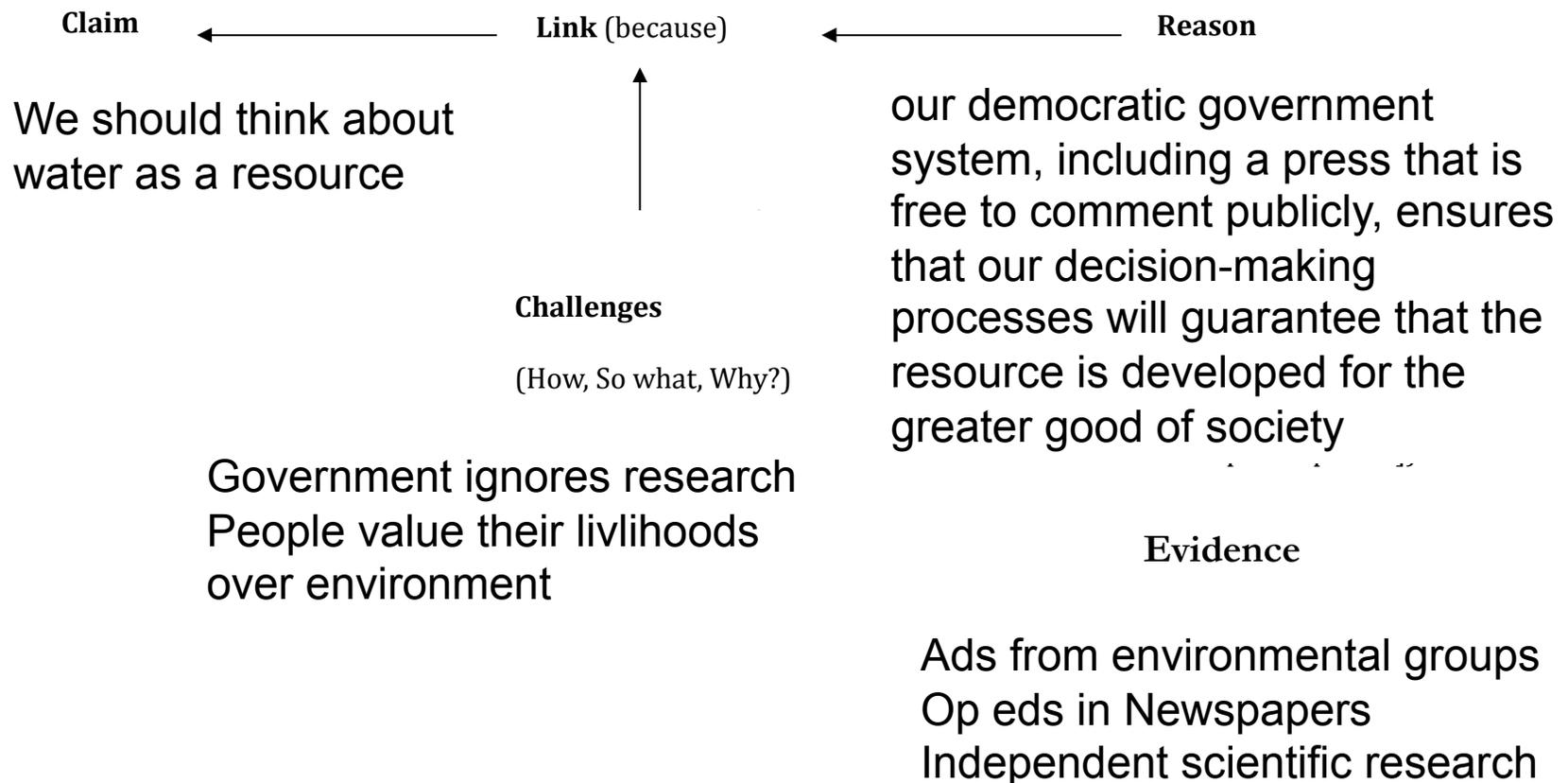
# Informal Argument and Academic Writing



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- We should think of water as a commodity because our democratic government system, including a press that is free to comment publicly, ensures that our decision-making processes will guarantee that the resource is developed for the greater good of society. [Kant, formalism]
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# Informal Argument and Academic Writing



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# Free tuition

- Free tuition **for:**

**Against:**

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# Challenges/rebuttal

If you are in favor of developing the oil sands, how can you anticipate arguments against your position? As you rebut those arguments, you make your own position stronger.

- Arguments against water as commodity:

- Arguments for water as commodity:



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## Solved—ethical position

- Evidence doesn't support a no development position, so there is no evidence to support a position where water is a commodity
  - Contractarianism holds that if the process is fair, then the outcome must be just/**fair—original, new**. Decisions must be based on evidence rather than on emotion.
  - In the case of water, the decision process is flawed if evidence is suppressed as one University of Alberta professor asserts.
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# Looking ahead: Drafts of reports

- Use the C4W as a resource to get feedback before handing in final drafts
  - Work hard at developing broad writing skills to handle the challenges of writing at work and in academic settings
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