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# MEC E 200: Writing Persuasively

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Acting Director, Centre for Writers

# Roger Graves



**Roger Graves**  
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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 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 offers free one-on-one writing coaching and support to students, instructors, and staff. It lists services such as thesis formation, organization, idea development, grammar, and documentation style. A link to "Request a class room visit by a tutor" is provided. A welcome message for the Fall 2009 term states that tutoring hours begin on Monday, September 14. The right sidebar contains a date stamp (9/2/2009 10:34:15 AM), an "Express News" section, a "Twitter Updates" section with a tweet about the fall term opening on September 14, and a "GramWOW" section with a video player.

 *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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# 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:  
essays, reflections, summaries, annotated bibliographies
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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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**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, Tech support team leader

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# Genres 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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# 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



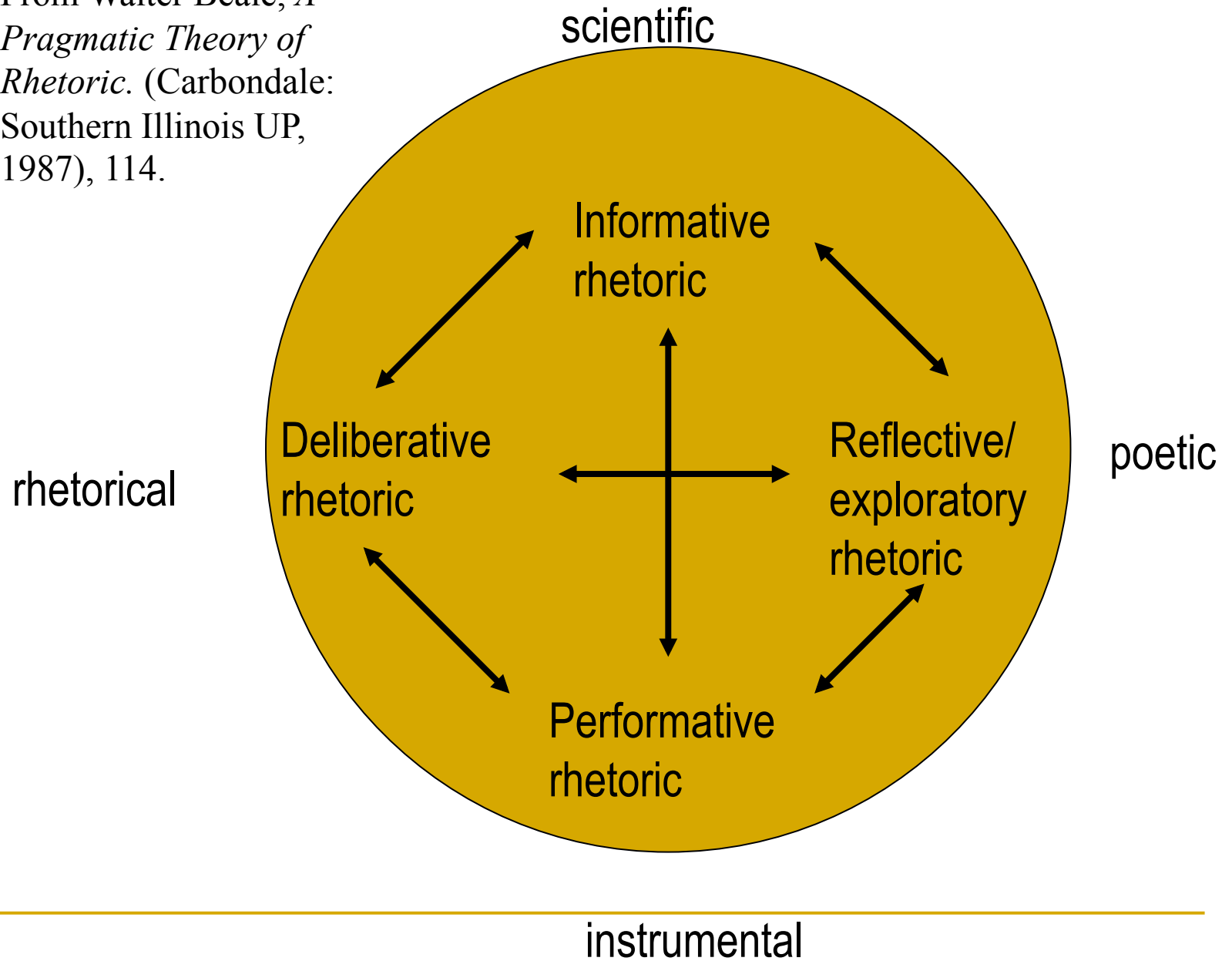


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# Purposes

- Writing that focuses on instrumental discourse (discourse that aims to do something)
    - E.g. computer manuals (print and help screens)
    - Assembly instructions for toys, appliances, games
    - Research articles
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From Walter Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987), 114.



# The circular model

- Highlights the dual aims 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

*Express*News [Home](#)

UNIVERSITY BUSINESS  
[Alberta Students Finance Electronic Application Assistance](#)


MEDIA  
[News Releases](#)  
[Guide to Experts](#)  
[Media Tips](#)  
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[Media Links](#)

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 **Ileiren 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

[Print story](#) | [Email story](#)  
[Video coverage of Stand Up Against Poverty](#)

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## 5 Factors affecting success

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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1. **writing processes**—worksheets (**planned for**)
  2. **feedback** on drafts—Abstract feedback template, C4W (**available, planned for**)
  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**)
  5. **audiences/readers**—instructor (**relatively easy**)
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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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# Purposes in this paper

- Outline the issue at hand
  - Propose a solution based on one ethical principle
  - convince the reader that the application of this ethical theory would prevent future occurrences of this kind
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# Drafting the paper

## **Launch:**

- Utilitarian argument suggests that the greater good for society would be served by launching

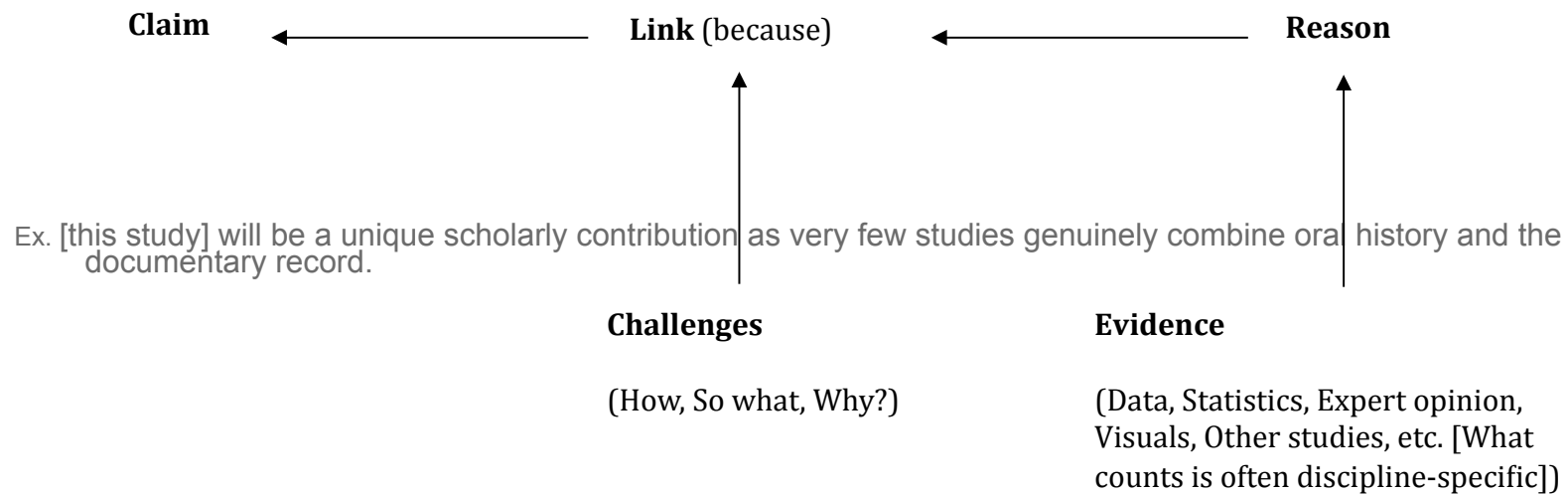
## **Abort launch:**

- Overall safety of the astronaut is more important than meeting deadlines—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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# Challenges/rebuttal

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

■ Arguments against:

■ Arguments for launch:



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# Best evidence in engineering

- What is the strongest evidence in an engineering context like this?
  - Statistics?
  - Downside risk?
  - Credibility/past record of success?
  - Logic?
  - Emotion?
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# Part 1: Explication of philosophical principle

- 1. Utilitarianism - John Stuart Mill
  - 2. Virtue Ethics – Aristotle
  - 3. Formalism – Immanuel Kant
  - 4. Contractarianism - John Rawls.
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## Part 2: Ethical dilemma explained and “solved”

- Data suggesting the launch will not succeed
  - Some knew it, but they didn't get their message through
  - Management ended up hitting the impending deadline with efficiency—a practical decision, but not a good ethical decision
  - NASA management—made decision with info on hand; engineers were ignored and their perspective not passed on
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## Solved—ethical position

- Evidence doesn't support a no launch position, so there is no evidence to support a no launch decision
  - 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 the launch of the Challenger, the decision process was flawed. . . .
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## Looking ahead

- 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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