

The background features a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white dots. On the left side, there are several overlapping circular elements. A prominent one is a large circle with a scale around its perimeter, marked with numbers from 140 to 260 in increments of 10. Other circles are partially visible, some with dashed lines and arrows, suggesting a process or cycle. The overall aesthetic is clean and technical.

# THE POWER OF PEER REVIEW

FROM YOUR FRIENDS IN THE WRITING CENTER

# BEFORE WE GET TO PEER REVIEW ....

We have to first understand:

“Tools without heart are meaningless ... no one changes if they feel unsafe.”

-Dr. Robert Dee McDonald

# PEER REVIEW: THE MAGICAL WORLD OF--

*Stinky, Sweaty, Sweary, Excess Adrenaline*

*What do we know?*



WE KNOW:  
WORDS OCCASIONALLY MISTAKEN AS SYNONYMS FOR 'PEER REVIEW'



WE KNOW:

SOME POTENTIAL CAUSES FOR THE **DREAD** OF PEER REVIEW?

- What are some of YOUR thoughts?
- Early Teaching Career Thoughts vs. Later Teaching Career Thoughts

## EARLY IN MY TEACHING CAREER (THOUGHTS ON CAUSES OF DREAD)

- No one explained the magical real-life benefits of “peer review”
- Terrible personal experience with “peer review”
- “Peer review” = official sounding, therefore, will take *many* hours

## LATER IN MY TEACHING CAREER (THOUGHTS ON CAUSES OF DREAD)

Original three were correct!

And so might be:

- Unclear directions or Unclear expectations
- Really high expectations or Zero expectations
- Lack of flexibility (inability to meet student at their individual level, student inability to hit minimum target) and minimum target = hit an established deadline and try their best
- So, let's easily address these!

# ADDRESSING COMMON CAUSES OF DREAD 1/4

## Three BIG ones:

- **Unclear directions** So, provide some very simple guidelines!
- **Unclear expectations** Seriously, 1-2 sentences combined with above.
- **Really high expectations** Ditch any high falutin' ideas of perfection!



# ADDRESSING COMMON CAUSES OF DREAD 2/4

**Zero expectations** Ask yourself if you actually like teaching anymore

It's a little disconcerting to open a class and see ALL As! or ALL Fs for final grades or on complex assignments and papers. Certainly, for a peer review assignment.

Check to see if burnout or grading biases have crept in. Burnout can happen to anyone as can grading bias - and there are many biases, like halo effect or maybe implicit (unconscious) bias

<<MJ Rodriguez has a GREAT presentation about grading bias; I highly recommend it.>>

And: “high intelligence does not make people immune to biases” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 49)

# ADDRESSING COMMON CAUSES OF DREAD 3/4

- **Terrible and possibly scarring previous experience**

Share some of your own with students. Keep it PG even if it was an R-rated night-sweat swear-fest circus sideshow.

Be that role model for peer review that students need. Show how you have grown, evolved and no longer blame or hold a grudge. Even if you do.

# ADDRESSING COMMON CAUSES OF DREAD 4/4

- **Lack of flexibility (inability to meet student at their individual level, student inability to hit minimum target)**

As instructors, we have to allow students agency for their choices, for their educational outcomes, (rewards AND consequences) BUT we need to take students' skills and abilities into consideration with our feedback and suggestions.

I need students to do two things (minimum target): hit an established deadline and try their best. And I tell them this. At the beginning! And speaking of ....

# AT THE BEGINNING ...

THAT'S when I recommend to introduce the concept of 'peer review' and the fact that it's coming in week X. Make students aware of it, talk about it, integrate, normalize it ... instead of treating it as the “DREAD(ed) OneOff Let'sGetthroughThis GritYourTeethandHoldYourBreath IsItOverYet” event.

## 4 WAYS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR PEER REVIEW

- 1:1 pep talks/emails (and FAQs)
- “One minute paper” idea
- The Reminder
- Early Introduction

I will focus on that last one – early introduction! (and a BONUS gift on last slide!)

# EARLY INTRODUCTION OF PEER REVIEW

(REAL LIFE EXAMPLES TO USE!)

- Set up peer engagement opportunities:

Example – in the intro/early discussion: "Hey Jenny! Loved what you said about X. Did you see what Laurie said about Y?"

Another example (pop culture an easy in): "Oh, tell me more – what's so intriguing about that 'thing' in question"?

Note: This assists with RSI (Reg and Substantive Interaction) and helps you switch between champion/cheerleader; moderator; and question asker. Bonus kudo if you can demo APA formatting as well – right away.

## SO, WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE PEER REVIEW AND/OR DISCUSSION: 1 OF 2

- You CAN refer to the checklist and the directions and the rubric, but sometimes, if it's a discussion, all students can benefit from seeing this:
- Example 1: "Be sure to read all course lecture materials, your textbook, MindTap, and instructor (my) feedback — not just for your peer review and discussion in week 4, but for your grade (see the rubric for full expectations). You want as many points as possible, right? All right. Yes, me, too. I also want you to achieve as many points as possible. So feel free to ask me any questions about the course, your assignments, as we go along! Best, RB."

Example 2: "Thanks so much for uploading your paper before the deadline, Jimmy! That gives me a chance to thoroughly review your work. I have a lot of feedback inline (in the document) for you as well as in the gradebook box itself. Let me know if you have any questions!" THEN "For anyone interested in Jimmy's paper about '*awesome topic here*', I started with the thesis — which I found well-crafted and well-placed! That one gorgeous sentence that is the main idea of the entire essay — notice it's the last sentence of the introduction paragraph AND then reflected those points well in his topic sentences? I did!"

## SO, WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE PEER REVIEW AND/OR DISCUSSION: 2 OF 2

Maybe the student didn't DO that well *at all*, so I might say:

Example 4:

"For anyone interested in Jimmy's paper about '*awesome topic here*', I started with this captivating sentence in paragraph 3. It's clear and concise and provides excellent insight into the thesis. What are some ways now we can help the topic sentences reflect the thesis, so we can fill more paragraphs with clear/concise sentences like this?" (Rhonda's Repeat-O-Rama!)



# RHONDA'S PERSONAL PEER REVIEW HITS

## (RECENT & PERSONALIZED FEEDBACK EXAMPLES)

- **Student choice/agency:** I tell them: “You're posting feedback in what is essentially a discussion forum. I can assign you someone, you can choose a partner, you can skip this part entirely and lose the points, (but your grade may suffer) you're an adult – you should make that decision. I say give it your best – you might be surprised.”
- **Conversations/Directions:** I tell students: “As an undergrad, I reviewed as many papers as possible, gave as much feedback as possible with hopes for the same in return. Treated it like a yard sale – took items that worked for me and left the rest. But I wanted my money's worth! I wanted to be better, my best, at writing, communication, networking – ALSO a mentor told me that all of this would help me build the skills and thick skin I would need as a professional. And WOW – was that guy NOT KIDDING.”

# WHY IS PEER REVIEW CRITICAL?

- ANSWER: WORKFORCE PREPARATION

## Benefits:

- **Increases collaboration**
- **Identifies common issues**
- **Encourages critical thinking**
- **Informs you about your audience**
- **Enhances communication skills**
- **Improves your own writing**

(Calonia, 2021)

# RESOURCES

Calonia, J. (2021, February 16). 3 strategies for students to peer review writing.

*Grammarly*. <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/student-peer-review>

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Doubleday; Random House of Canada.

# THANKS -- Q&A

## Additional Suggested Readings:

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: 7 research-based principles for smart teaching*. Jossey-Bass; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Eberhardt, J. L., PhD. (2019). *Biased*. Viking; Penguin Random House LLC.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Doubleday; Random House of Canada.

Mendelsund, P. (2014). *What we see when we read*. Vintage Books; Random House.

# SMALL GIFT: E-Z PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Is the paper formatted well overall in APA? (title page, page numbers, 1' margins, indented paragraphs, etc.)
2. Additionally, are the APA In-text citations (parenthetical and narrative) formatted correctly? What about the final references?
3. Is the thesis one sentence, placed as the last sentence of the introduction paragraph? If so, is it clear (do you understand what the essay's going to be about?)
4. Are there at least five full paragraphs (an intro, three body, one conclusion) and does each paragraph contain, at minimum, 4-5 sentences?
5. Do the topic sentences reflect the thesis?
6. Are there enough transitions to help show the reader relationships between complex ideas?
7. Did the hook, and introduction's subsequent information, use a strategy to pull you in – if so, did it work? Why or why not?
8. Did the conclusion use a strategy to pull you in – if so, did it work? Why or why not?
9. Are there any instances where information is repeated but should instead be expanded upon?
10. Are there any obstacle points in the essay for you, as a reader? (that is: does the essay go off topic? Were you confused by a word, sentence, or idea? Are there abrupt shifts in voice, tone, style, POV, flow ... ?)

# BONUS GIFT! (USED IN INTRO DISCUSSION)

(COPY/PASTE PORTIONS)

Just a brief reminder for everyone (posted for each student, so you only have to read once here, on your post):

I am ALWAYS here for feedback prior to the final deadline of an assignment. Want to know if you're on track? Email me! Want to know what a line edit of your document looks like before you upload? Email me! Want to go for all those points possible? Email me! (and if you have access, you can find me in the Writing Center this term, next to Writing Center Director Heidi Chavez!)

But remember: Week 7 is our Peer Review Assignment! And for points! Here's why that is exciting:

You have access here to many intelligent peers in this course: professionals in the medical field who know things I don't. I know writing and communications and education and coaching ... but cool medical knowledge? Sure, I've read a lot in the last 20 years, but your peers are a **goldmine** of information. While peers cannot submit the *same content* in an assignment, you can certainly workshop, proofread and *peer review* each other's work! I encourage it. Higher education is one of the few remaining institutions where you can generously gain access to the time of others in your field and help each other to get the best grade possible. The more you practice peer review and proofreading, the better you become at this skill – and it is that: a serious talent and ability that can help you everywhere you go.

So, for Week 7's Peer Review Assignment – you can choose several peers' papers to review; you can do the minimum number indicated in the directions, or I can assign you a paper to review! But get to know your peers in your program! You're a team now.

Best always, RB