

# Sample student-student communication based on my online assignments

These four students have given permission for me to use their work. Their names have been changed to conceal their identities. Their responses are in reverse chronological order.

These are also some of the most effective assignments I crafted. The two assignments appear below:

## Journal 5

Posted on [November 9, 2014](#) by [jdl299](#) | [1 Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

## Contrasting Rhetoric and Grammar

Purpose: to examine grammatical and rhetorical differences between English and your native language.

Read this Sample Email Message:

*Dear Dr. Smith,*

*I really enjoyed your Economics 376 course last spring, and I am grateful for the extra help you gave me during your office hours. I was wondering if I could stop by some time again to discuss three internship opportunities I am planning to apply to. Given your familiarity with my work in Econ 376, I was wondering if you would be willing to write letters of recommendation for me, if you are available.*

*The applications are due in about four months, so I wanted to let you know about them as soon as I could. I would be available to meet between 2 and 5 pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Would any of these time slots be available for a meeting sometime during the next 3 or 4 weeks?*

*Thanks,  
Firstname Lastname*

**Next, complete the following translation activity, and then write a short reflection about it.**

1. Think about how you would write a similar request to a university professor in your home country. On a sheet of notebook paper, translate this email message into your native language. However, try to make it sound as natural as possible for your own cultural environment. Think about how you would communicate respectfully with the professor. You may change the style so it would make more sense or sound better in your native culture. It is possible your introduction, body, and conclusion would be quite different from the American English version. PLEASE BRING THIS TRANSLATED MESSAGE TO CLASS ON 11/12 or 11/13.
2. Compare your version to the original version and write about any major differences you notice. There may be different grammatical features or different rhetorical features that your classmates and I would be interested in reading about.
3. After you compare and contrast both the grammar and the rhetorical style, write a 200-300 word journal post discussing what you noticed. Don't forget to comment on your group members' posts.

Due dates for **Section 8**: finish your post by 5 pm on Wednesday, 11/12. Respond to your group members before midnight on Friday, 11/14.

Due dates for **Sections 7 and 12**: finish your post before class begins on Thursday, 11/13. Respond to your group members before midnight on Saturday, 11/15.

## Reading Response 5

Posted on [November 25, 2014](#) by [jdl299](#) | [1 Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

Due Dates:

Section 8: Post is due by 6 pm on Monday, 12/1; respond to group mates by 12/3

Sections 7 and 12: Post is due BEFORE CLASS begins on Tuesday, 12/2; respond to group mates by 12/4.

The theme of this reading assignment is shame and punishment. As you read, think about the issue of "being tough on crime." In your opinion, is it better to be harsh with criminals, or to give them mercy? Some people think the US justice system is not strict enough, while many others think we are too strict and have an unjust system.

For example, in the USA, police officer Darren Wilson is criticized harshly for shooting Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Many people think it was wrong for the police officer to use a gun to defend himself when Michael Brown attacked him. Other people think it is justified to shoot someone who attacks you. Could the police officer have done something different instead of shooting Michael Brown, or was using his gun his only option? What do you think? Is it justified for a police officer to shoot an attacker, or should a police officer do something else

instead? Click [here for the officer's version of the story, which explains why he used his gun.](#) (Just think about these questions; you don't have to answer them in your post, unless you so desire.)

For this reading assignment, first read pages 569-586 in *Models for Writers*. The first two essays in this section are about shame and punishment, and the last one is mostly about going to prison for "petty" or small crimes. After you read these essays on pages pages 569-586, write a 200-word post answering the following questions:

- Which perspectives in these essays surprised you the most? Why?
- Which writer did you disagree with the most? Why did you disagree?
- What counterarguments or reasons would you use to refute the author's claims?

To receive full credit for this assignment, you must

1. write 200-300 words on your own group's page,
2. read your group members' posts, and
3. compose a brief reply (about 50-150 words) to your group members within 2 days after the due date.

These four students have given permission for me to use their work. Their names have been changed to conceal their identities. Their responses are in reverse chronological order.

1.  [Xiao Wei](#) | [December 4, 2014 at 9:25 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Yasmin,

I totally agree with your view on shaming. Your idea that the purpose of the punishment for minor crime should not be making the criminal feel bad and thus conduct even worse crime, instead, it should somehow adjust their behavior and indicate them back on the right track and be a good citizen is so true.

Mateo,

The situation you mentioned here that if the criminal has already abandoned his dignity, making him felt nothing about how other's view on him, is really one of the biggest issue on the shaming system. I think through the community serves, the criminal can regain their dignity and actually prevent themselves from conducting another crime in the future.

Nisha,

I agree with your statement that guilt is more powerful than shame when comparing their effectiveness. And instead we punish them by taking away some of their rights like freedom, we can actually make them contribute to the society as their compensation of what they have done to others is a great alternative solution.

2.  [Nisha Gupta](#) | [December 4, 2014 at 4:04 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Nisha Gupta  
Group Response to Reading Response 5  
12/4/2014

Yasmin,

I agree with you, shame leads to negative impacts like depression and trauma. The law should be fair and punish violent crimes by imprisoning the victims. But, for crimes like drinking and driving, underage alcohol consumption and petty thefts, the punishment does not really have to shame but it can also be to make the person feel guilty. So, my argument also proves that shame is not the best solution because it leads to an even more worse condition.

Xiao,

I have been acquainted with situations like these before, so these things are pretty common in the society. It surprises me that you were not aware of this situation. Though, it is really nice that you have considered these aspects to form your opinion. We can raise a monster even if we make a guilty person do shameful things as punishment. And I really like the way you think of the society, it is a very different aspect of considering about children as well.

Mateo,

I agree with you, for me too, it was really surprising that there was such a vast difference between these two and the way we perceive these, changes the circumstances. And of course, the author, Tangney's essay was really convincing. And that is very true, people who have committed crimes before and are not that shameful, they will continue to commit crimes. But for people like these, imprisonment is the absolute punishment.



3. [Mateo Melo Castro](#) | [December 4, 2014 at 10:48 am](#) | | [Edit](#)

Group Response to Reading Response 5

Mateo Melo Castro

12/04/14

Yasmin,

I agree with the idea of voluntary work correlated to the crime. As you said, it makes the offender think about the crime he or she committed and serves as an educational measure, halting the possibility of the crime being committed again by him or her in the future.

Xiao,

Your statements are completely true. Every person has its own characteristics, and the reaction to pressure and shame is not the same for everybody, making this form of punishment unfair and ineffective. Your point about how children are going to perceive shame-based punishment is very interesting and important, as this situation can cause a huge effect on how the future society. In addition, I agree with your opinion about the difference between community-based sentence and voluntary work.

Nisha,

It is true that shame-based embarrassment and imprisonment are not the same thing. As you said, the psychological and social effects of the methods are completely distinct, and it is wrong to classify them as one single issue. About shame, complementing what you said, I think it is not an educational form of punishment, because it does not tell the person why the crime is wrong, it just says that it is wrong. On the other hand, guilt-based sentences have an educational effect, as they show to the offender the negative outcomes of the crime and thus is more effective when it comes to preventing future crimes.

4.  [Yasmin Duc Tat Salaam Noor](#) | [December 2, 2014 at 9:00 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Xiao,

In my opinion, I think that making the low-profile criminals to do volunteer works that related to their crime will be a good punishment for them. I agree that it will make the deed, volunteer work to not become what it supposed to be when the criminals do that. In that matter, I propose that the authorities should come out with a new name that give the exact description for the action. Other than that, I agree with all your statements and reasoning.

Nisha,

You gave a great distinction between the imprisonment and embarrassment as a punishment for the crimes. It was really clear and emphasized the effect that these two different action will give in term of the time that it will take. It is true that to make the criminals feel guilty and remorse is better than to make them feel ashamed. It may be looks simple, but it is really not because of the aftereffects that it will cause.

Mateo,

It is good that you now have a better understanding about the differences between “shame” and “guilt” because it is such a big deal if we have a misleading idea about those two words. I also hope that the authorities will alter the system that they are currently having, so that it will become more reasonable. Besides, I agree that embarrass punishment is not valid as it is not educational as you said which means, it is not an effective method.

5.  [Yasmin Duc Tat Salaam Noor](#) | [December 2, 2014 at 5:09 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Reading response 5

Yasmin Duc Salaam Noor

12/2/14

The essay, “Shame is Worth a Try” really surprised me as it shows the different perspectives for the thing that I oppose, which is to use shaming as a method for criminal punishment. Kahan, the author believes that shame is the best, inexpensive and considerate substitute for imprisonment. For my discernment, making them to do volunteer works that have correlation with their crime is much a better way which also cheap and tolerable replace for confinement.

As the second essay surprised me, it means I totally disagree with all the contents that Kahan wrote about. A man who did some low-level crime can just do volunteer works rather than shame oneself. Once they done something shameful, it can drive them mad and become more rebellious. They will have the desire to do something much worse than

what they did before. All in all, this clearly shows that shame is not the best solution for this problem.

Everything that the author claims can be discredited as based on the essay “Condemn the Crime, Not the Person”. The author, Tangney definitely has the best idea about this matter. The punishment that we want to give for the criminal is to make them to feel guilty and not humiliation. When they are doing the volunteer works that connected to their crime, it can make them feel guilty which makes them regret for anything that they had done and have the passion to for constructive solutions.



6. [Xiao Wei](#) | [December 1, 2014 at 10:55 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Reading Response 5

Xiao Wei

12/01,2014

Almost every time I do a reading response I got surprised. Probably it is because I paid too less attention on the society, I didn't even know there is such a problem exist. One of the surprises this time is that some think the community-based sentences might harm the way people view the volunteer activity. Volunteering is to help others or the society without asking for return, and it's out of the volunteer's will under no any kind of pressure. Community-based sentence is punishment, it forces criminal to pay for what one have done, it is essentially different from volunteering.

I disagree with the view of the second essay—Shame Is Worth a Try. What people discuss a lot on this issue is whether shame actually work effectively as a punishment and does this method solve the filled up prison problem. But there are two aspect that we should definitely consider, how good a person is at handling pressure and how other normal citizen will be effected by the method. How good a person can handle pressure very a lot; the environment a person grew up in, one's characteristic, and even one's education level are all factors of the ability. A person with strong resistance will see shame as nothing and will not change his behavior. On the other hand, one with weak mind state of handling pressure will find oneself suffer too much from the pressure society put on him, which is great and sometimes even unreasonable. If at the end he can't hold it any more, what we create is not only a person who conduct small crimes, instead, we create a monster and no one can predict what crazy thing he can do next.

Also, shame may affect normal citizen as well. We do a great effort on forming a environment that people can live happily and trust each other, and children can play outside and have a awesome childhood. Just imagine if it become frequent seeing people with crime labels on them, how are children going to trust others? How can people interact with others as harmony as we can now? In my opinion, this issue still has too much uncertainty, we shouldn't jump right into practice.

7.  [Nisha Gupta](#) | [November 30, 2014 at 4:19 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Nisha Gupta  
Reading Response 5  
November 30, 2014

For me, the second essay, “Shame is Worth a try” was surprising. I agree to the fact that imprisonment is the absolute punishment for violent crimes. But what surprised me the most is that the author considers the embarrassment caused by shameful acts and imprisonment are the same. They can never be same. Of course shame hurts. But all the shameful punishments that you practice do not add to your biography. They are short time punishments, whose pain is healed with time. But when someone is sent to jail even for short time committing things like perjury or embezzlement or for life time committing things like murder, they add to their biography and stick to it forever. You become a shame to the society forever. So according to me shameful punishments and jail time cannot be compared at all. They are two very different punishments with extremely different longterm consequences.

I definitely disagree with the idea of the second essay. Where the author is in favor of shame. I personally feel that shame would be the worst feeling. Imagine a person carrying the board of his wrong doing and walking in the society. It is a lot more shameful. I believe the person might be directed to a wrong direction. It is not easy to face that much of shame. The person might then turn out to be extremely depressed and disturbed. The person might hide or escape the shameful thing. He can try to shift the blame to someone else. This can lead to the person being aggressive and destructive.

I believe that rather than shame, guilt can be more promising. There should be an attempt to try and make the person feel guilty. Because guilt can lead to a more positive response as compared to shame. There is a sense of tension and regret. Guilt is most likely to foster constructive changes. For example, in the first essay by June Tangney, she suggests that drunk drivers could be sentenced to help clear sites of road accidents and to assist with campaigns to reduce drunk driving. Slumlords could be sentenced to assist with nuts and bolts rapid in low-income housing units. So there are a lot of alternative punishments apart from shame and imprisonment.

8.  [Mateo Melo Castro](#) | [November 29, 2014 at 6:17 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Reading Response 5 – Reflections on justice system  
Mateo Melo Castro  
11/29/2014

The debate about justice system is very delicate and involves a huge amount of factors, not being something trivial to deal with. With respect to the essays, the perspective that



surprised me the most was the difference between “shame” and “guilt” stated by June Tangney. I always thought that those concepts represented a single emotional element, but with the arguments given by her, now I agree that they are very distinct from each other. With this difference stated, I also agree with her idea that shame should not be used as an element of condemnation.

I was surprised with the situation around the three-strikes law too. By what Carl M. Cannon said in his essay, I think this situation is completely appalling because of its inefficiency and injustice. In my opinion, it shows that the system should be reformed in order to be smarter, equitable and efficient with respect to costs and decrease of crime rate.

I disagree with Dan M. Kahan’s essay, based on the perspective declared by June Tangney. I think the idea of damaged reputation defended by him can be a good form of punishment only in some cases. If we think about cases of people who already have a bad reputation and would not have anything to “lose” with punishments based on shame, they would keep practicing the crimes anyway. In addition, I think this form of punishment is not educational, because it does not show to the offender how bad his crime is for the society. With respect to community services, I do not think it would insult voluntary workers because their primary idea is to help the community, and not to get social prestige from it. Then, extra help would be perceived as something beneficial, not an insult.



9. [Yasmin Duc Tat Salaam Noor](#) | [November 15, 2014 at 11:29 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Xiao,

I spot the similarities between our cultures, which is to always be polite, especially when communicating with someone older or in higher positions. It is my first time to know how mandarin works where you would usually mention the time at the very beginning of your sentence and not saying it anymore until the time period is different for the next topic.

Mateo,

Glad that your mother tongue is not really that differ from English because it can make your learning process about English become much easier and can be good at both ideally. In my culture, we also need to address someone in a higher position with the title that they deserved as it is kind of disrespectful if we use the “you”, just the same as yours.

Nisha,

It is kind of “improper” in our culture to over-flattering the lecturer because it would seem like we’re being a hypocrite and just act nice when we want to ask the lecturer to do a favor for us. So this does show the contrast between our cultures in this aspect, but for the politeness, it is just the same. That is the way for us to show our respects toward the lecturer which will please him.

10.  [Xiao Wei](#) | [November 15, 2014 at 9:37 pm](#) || [Edit](#)

Yasmin,

After learning about different cultures and their languages, I noticed that it is quite common to be respectful toward others especially those in a higher positions between cultures. I think especially in this kind of letter, in which we are asking the professor for a favor, the manner is really important, since if the professor thought that one was not respecting him, he would probably delete the mail directly just like the youtube video we saw during last class.

Mateo,

In Taiwan, most of our high schools and universities also use the “first semester, second semester” system as well, but there is still some private high schools and universities use the “spring/fall semester” system. In the past, our time measurement system during a day was totally different from the one we use right now, the largest unit was two hours, and fifteen minute as another unit. During the Japanese colonial period, the modern time system was finally introduced, and we use it ever since, so we usually use AM/PM.

Nisha,

Although Taiwanese also tend to be polite, but a little difference between our culture I noticed is that we do not actually flatter. Sometimes, flattering would be view as a kind of being sarcastic, therefore is not polite. We consider more about not making others trouble than giving flattery commons. But the ultimate purposes are the same, to make the professor feel good and help us.

11.  [Mateo Melo Castro](#) | [November 15, 2014 at 1:17 am](#) || [Edit](#)

Group Response to Journal 5

Mateo Melo Castro

11/15/14

Nisha,

For me it is very interesting to know that the Indian way of writing gives value to the persuasiveness and flatter, because in our culture it does not happen. If we did this in Brazil, we would give a bad impression to the teacher, as this is perceived as something artificial during a conversation. Professionalism is highly valued in our culture, so we would have to be polite, direct and efficient during a conversation, just as in the United States.

Yasmin,

It seems that the Malaysian rhetoric in this case has plenty of common aspects with English, as well as with my culture too. We give a huge value to politeness, and for us it is also very important to be professional and not to involve a high personal load on the rhetoric for this case.

Xiao,

It is sad to know that Taiwanese is dying. I think all languages, regardless of complexity or usefulness, should be preserved, because they represent a unique aspect of a culture, and can provide models for future improvements in other languages. With respect to rhetoric, I think the main difference between your culture and mine is relative to indirect questions in this case, because my culture values it more than direct questions. Also, it is interesting to know that there is no verb tense in your language, and I think it can make the language more efficient.



12. [Xiao Wei](#) | [November 13, 2014 at 10:33 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Journal 5  
Xiao Wei  
11/13,2014

In Taiwanese tradition, we tend to be polite to everyone and have really complicated system on how to interact with people in different positions, although people nowadays don't necessarily behave like this any more. But my family is a relatively traditional Taiwanese family, so I was taught to be more polite and respect almost every one older than me.

So for the letter, I would change some indirect sentences into direct questions, it is not because this type of sentence is not polite, it is because it's too dramatic in mandarin, and would probably not mention about the recommendation letter, the letter should be something we talk about during the meeting. And for the time, I would mention that I want it be within three to four weeks, but leave the time slot open for professor to decide. I would put "thank you" at the very end of second paragraph and put name and date at the lower right of the letter. And as Jonathan mentioned in class, there is no tense in our language. I have never thought about this, but I think the hypotheses he gave makes quite a lot of sense. But one thing I want to address is that sometimes it works like taking out common factors, we might give the time only once and it applies to the rest events till the next time I change the time.

Also I'd like to mention a little about Taiwanese, which is the main language for our grandparent's generation, especially in southern part of Taiwan. I think it's more like a vernacular or dialect instead of a language. What's more. it is a dying one. A lot of the younger generation can only use Mandarin, and it is hard to learn Taiwanese since a lot

of the characters are lost. So even some people speak Taiwanese, they would still wrote this letter in a similar way as Mandarin.

13.  [Yasmin Duc Tat Salaam Noor](#) | [November 13, 2014 at 5:07 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Journal 5  
Yasmin Duc Salaam Noor  
11/13/14

Malaysia is known for the tradition of being polite to everyone in everything, especially when engaging with the elders, the experts or someone with a higher position. While translating this letter, there were a few sentences that I need to add and also reconstruct because technically, English and Malay have a minor difference in the matter of the sentence structure. Usually, we start writing the letter by greeting the lecturer and kind of pray for his well-being. In continuation of that, our rhetorical style is by slowly approaching him and telling about the most basic information for the actual thing that we want to ask.

After telling him our real intentions of writing the letter, we then ask him politely for his free time for the meeting and tell him about our free time. Not to forget, we always address him with the title that he earned to show our respect. If you want an express reply, just write it at the end of the letter to let your lecturer aware about your urgent request. Malay is the simplest language among all I think, because we do not have to concern about making grammar mistakes because ours are not as complicated as English. However, these things that stroked through my mind are just based on my opinion as how I would write to a lecturer and that is may be the way that most of us would prefer to write to a professor.

14.  [Xiao Wei](#) | [November 13, 2014 at 4:01 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Yasmin,

This truly is a tricky issue to discuss about, there are definitely strong supporters for both sides, and all of them have reasonable reasons to support their thoughts. The situation that makes us struggle the most is the choice between humanity treatment toward mostly the terrorists and the possibility to save numbers of innocent people, and it is really hard for the society to give a clear answer.

Mateo,

One major aspect that makes this issue so sensitive is how much human rights terrorists deserve. Since they planed or even had done such terrible thing to others, the opinions on their human rights differ from person to person, but there is one thing people should

never ignore, the purpose of the torture here is to get possible information that can save lives, not to satisfy the rage we have toward terrorists, as a human being, which I totally agree.

Nisha,

I agree with you that torturing should be permitted, but only in some extreme cases. By extreme cases, I mean that the authorities have to have a certain amount of evidence that the target acquired the information related to mass murder or terrorist attack, and they strongly refused to provide them. There should be no torturing if the authority only “assume” that the target has important information nor if the person is willing to cooperate. In other words, torturing should be the very last means for authority to get info.



15. [Mateo Melo Castro](#) | [November 13, 2014 at 12:25 am](#) | | [Edit](#)

Journal 5 – Comparison between styles of rhetoric in Portuguese and English  
Mateo Melo Castro  
13/11/2014

In terms of rhetoric, the translated text to Portuguese has the same overall style, with just minor differences in grammar and use of words. I think this happens because of the common influences that Portuguese and English had undergone, specially the Latin influence. I will describe some of the differences that I observed when translating the text.

In terms of word use, in Portuguese we do not use seasons (Fall/Spring) in order to refer to semesters of the year. Especially in Brazil, we do not have major differences between the seasons as high-latitude countries do, thus we just use “first semester” or “second semester” to refer to the halves of the year. It is not common to use AM or PM when referring to periods of the day as well, we just say “in the morning”, “in the afternoon” or “in the evening”. When it comes to addressing a person, we use specific pronouns when we want to talk to people that are in a relatively higher position or status. It is considered disrespectful to use the direct translation of the word “you” when talking to professors or doctors, because this word would be only used on informal context.

When it comes to order of words, in Portuguese we generally reverse the order in which adjectives or following nouns are put in a sentence comparing to English. For example, we would not say “internship opportunities”; instead, we would use something equivalent to “opportunities of internship”. Another example would be the phrase “office hours”, which would be exchanged for “hours of office”.

I noticed some other differences as well, such as words in English that do not have a direct translation to Portuguese (e.g. “application”), but this overall contrast is not strong enough to make the text become completely different when translated. As I said before,

Portuguese and English have plenty of common characteristics, making the overall rhetoric the same in both cases.



16. [Nisha Gupta](#) | [November 12, 2014 at 11:17 pm](#) | | [Edit](#)

Journal 5

Nisha Gupta

November 12, 2014

In my culture, we tend to be extremely grateful to our professors who have taught us before. Letters like these in India contain a lot of content that focuses on flattering the teacher. So even in my translated letter in first paragraph I have just praised the teacher's teachings and the amount of respect everyone has for him. In the American version of the letter, the conversation is point to point. They do not talk about anything extra, whereas we just impress the teacher by our words at first and then bring up the issue. I guess that this is the only major difference in the way I have written the letter in my native language and the way written above.

So the only form of change is that we use more of persuasive language and more of requesting tone in our letter. The letters are not that "professional". The second paragraph of the letter is very general because you just have to mention the times at which you are available and request the teacher to fix an appointment. Well, I guess the way you start the first paragraph of your letter, is the way teacher might approach you. So, according to me being more persuasive and flattery, but not too much, you might increase your chances of getting an appointment and an efficient letter of recommendation.