<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1780808> part 4 Done!

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=269540> chapter 9

Name:

Tagline: Work and live smarter; what is the question?;

Static Website Setup

* Expectations/ things to think about
  + What to improve – get a website
  + Some freelance website samples
    - What do you like/ what do you NOT like?
  + Color choices
  + Decision person – me
  + Create a mockup (a drawing) -> approve -> finalize
  + Pictures
  + Motivations

Cover

Sticky footer content

Website write-up

# Home

Hello, I’m Idhi.

I am a biology and writing tutor for university students. I also work as a freelance reviewer and technical editor.

As a tutor, I aim to teach learners to think critically about their subject and their work. Learners can apply concepts only if they understand it. To encourage creative and critical thinking, I explain concepts by asking questions to determine their understanding and making the concepts relevant to them/their work.

In biology, my expertise is in:

* + Ecology and Evolution
  + Animal Behavior
  + Evolution
  + Behavioral ecology
  + Wetland ecology
  + Mountain ecology
  + Natural resources management
  + Basic ecology statistics.

As a writing tutor/reviewer/technical editor, I consider and provide feedback on:

* + Sentence structure
  + Paragraph structure
  + Grammatical issues
  + Flow of arguments
  + Flow of logic
  + Strength of arguments/logic used
  + Overall essay coherence
  + In-text citations
  + Reference list
  + Making academic presentations
  + Among others.

About me:

When I was fifteen, I fell in love with a book– “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection” by Charles Darwin. Since then, <em>ecology and evolution </em> has been a passion. While pursuing my second Masters’ degree, at the University of Calgary, I also worked as a Teaching Assistant (TA). If you are interested in learning about my research (in brief), click the link: why I spent years following bighorn sheep. Working as a TA ignited a second passion–teaching and learning. Now, I aim to merge the two passions together by working as a Tutor in Biology and Academic Writing for university students.

Most students are keen to improve their writing and critical thinking skills. I know this because I have graded and provided feedback on student assignments over several years. I kept track of student grades and found that, on average, by the end of each semester, the quality of student assignment improved by 15-25%. That is, at least, an entire letter-grade improvement! And it’s just based on my feedback—on their writing, logic and use of evidence—and their effort in addressing the feedback! More recently, as a writing tutor, I have been impressed with student desire to understand how to be better writers and dedication to self-improvement.

And I… I like working behind the scenes to help other people learn, develop their thinking and be successful. This is, also, why I enjoy reviewing and editing other people’s work. It’s not just about my work; it’s not just about your work. It’s about the both of us working collaboratively to make a coherent whole.

Working as a TA (and now as a Writing Tutor) I give students feedback on their assignments and writing. This feedback helps improve their critical thinking, presentation of ideas and communication skills. I know that most students are keen to improve because I have worked with them. Each semester, I kept track of student grades … and, on average, the quality of student assignment improved by 15-25%!

Contact:

If you want to work collaboratively, I’d love to hear from you! I am available for freelance projects and full-time employment.

Samridhi Rijal (Idhi)

[samridhir@gmail.com](mailto:samridhir@gmail.com)

Link to: LinkedIn

Tags: Research, Reflections, Thesis, Paper, SAGES poster

Tags: Research; Ecology; Reflections; Parasites;

My eyes were glued to the TV. There was a young ranger on-screen, walking through a tropical forest in the Indian sub-continent. He was talking about how he tracked tigers. In the middle of a sentence, he bent down to pick something that was off-screen. I was riveted. What could it possibly be?

He turned around and showed me what he had picked up–tiger poo. I lost interest—he went on to talk about how recently the tiger must have passed through the area based on the freshness of the poo. But he’d lost me. As a 10-year old, I remember thinking ‘well, that’s one thing I will never do!’ Fast-forward about 15 years, and here I am, a recent master’s degree graduate with three years of experience collecting and analysing bighorn sheep poo. (Life advice: Never say never!)

Poo, or feces, is extremely fascinating. Not only can the freshness indicate how long ago an individual may have passed by, but, if you analyse the feces, it can also tell you what individual eat and what gastrointestinal parasites they may have. I was interested in the latter. I wanted to know what the patterns of parasite infections in bighorn sheep was and whether these patterns affected an infected individuals’ activity level.

So, I collected fresh bighorn sheep poo, by observing them going about their daily business and making note of all the places that particular individuals could have pooed at. After the sheep left the area, either my assistant or I went to collect the poo. A green and brown grass

Description automatically generatedIf it was easy to squish the poo pellets between our fingers, we knew that it was fresh and collected it. It wasn’t too bad – we wore gloves… except when we forgot to.. Every sheep’s poo was stored separately so that I A close up of text on a white background

Description automatically generatedcould match the parasite patterns in individuals to their behavior.

Once we finished our observations and collected the relevant poo, we analysed the samples. Well, my amazing assistants processed the samples so that I could count the number of parasite eggs on each microscope slide.

After a couple of years of doing this I finally had answers for my questions:!

1. Does the season affect the number of parasite eggs that an individual shed in their poo? (spoiler alert: It does… but the parasite matters as well)
2. Does the host-sex (sex of the infected individual) affect the number of parasites eggs that an individual shed (in their poo)? (spoiler alert: Yes! And so, does the season. The relationship between season and host-sex on parasite egg count is fascinating!)
3. Does the parasite egg count affect activity level of the host? (spoiler alert: Meh, not really)

If you want to read my thesis (either the full or any part of 131 pages 😉), click “HERE”.

![A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated]()

I, also, like to talk. In case that was ever in doubt. :D

I prefer email. [samridhir@gmail.com](mailto:samridhir@gmail.com)

# Musings:

A close up of a green field

Description automatically generatedBased on secondary research, personal experiences (i.e., anecdotes), observations and discussions with other professionals, I think…

Biology –

Higher Education –

# Experiences

A picture containing outdoor, old, photo, small

Description automatically generated

My experiences can be divided into two categories – biology and teaching. Mostly working in conservation, and teaching biology and academic writing.

Yea, that’s right! I’ve been places… mostly, Asia and North America, but I’ve managed to sneak in couple of trips to Europe as well. And, I’m not exaggerating – Italian food is AMAZING! My friend and I went to Italy for a trip during Christmas break. And wow. I mean, Wow. The food, the weather… it was all amazing. Before I came to Calgary, I was actively looking for jobs in Rome because I loved the food. I wanted to relocate to Italy. I thought Italian food was hyped up and it was nothing that great. I was extremely pleased to find out that I was wrong. Italian food really is that amazing!

# Travels

A close up of a map

Description automatically generated

Green – For fun

Red – For work and studies

Tags:

1. Research
2. Higher Education
3. Ecology
4. Evolution
5. COVID-19
6. Personal Ruminations
7. Critical Thinking
8. Online vs in-person
9. Climate change
10. Conservation
11. Distance learning

Key words/key concepts

1. Working memory:
2. Chunking:
3. Critical thinking: broad concept—an individual’s ability to critically reflect on personal experiences and think scientifically within their discipline. In general, it is defined as the ability/cognitive skill that allows an individual to logically analyse and evaluate arguments (Facione 2000; Giancarlo and Facione 2001; Pithers and Soden 2000; Stupnisky et al 2008; Erikson and Erikson 2019). Researchers have further argued that it can also include an individual’s willingness and ability to clearly exchange ideas with others, including the ability to argue or seek clarification. Beyond the field increases ‘employability.’

Critical thinking in education is not about what conclusions student reach—it’s about how they reach them.

1. Creative thinking:
2. Ecology: the study of interactions between organisms and their physical environment.
3. Biotic: related to living things
4. Abiotic: related to non-living things
5. Zoology: the study of animal kingdom.
6. Evolution: very simply, the change in characteristics of a species over multiple generations.
7. Conservation: efficient use of resources
8. Preservation: maintaining resources in their original state
9. Climate change: Variations in climate patterns that, typically, last for longer than a decade.
10. Climate variability: variations in the characteristic of climate over shorter periods of time.
11. Diversity: variety; having different elements
12. Ecosystems: a biological community of organisms that interact with each other and their physical environments
13. Speciation: the evolutionary process by which populations develop characteristics that form a distinct species.
14. Haploid
15. Diploid
16. Adaptive radiation
17. Alpha diversity
18. Taxonomy
19. Paleozoic era
20. Cambrian period
21. Ordovician period
22. Biodiversity: the variety and variability of life in a given area (habitat, ecosystem, world)
23. Educational data mining:
24. Learning management systems:
25. Learning analytics:
26. Learning environments:
27. Technology:
28. Student engagement:
29. Learning:
30. Teaching:

When I was fifteen, I fell in love with a book– “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection” by Charles Darwin. Since then, biology, more specifically, ‘ecology and evolution’ has been a passion. More recently, while pursuing a Master of Science degree (why I spent years chasing after bighorn sheep) at the University of Calgary, I worked as a Teaching Assistant (TA). This ignited a second passion–teaching and learning. Now, I aim to merge these two passions together by working as a Tutor in Biology and Academic Writing for university students.

Working as a TA (and, currently, as a Writing Tutor) I give students feedback on their assignments and writing. This feedback helps improve their critical thinking and writing. I know that most students are keen to improve because I have worked with them. Each semester, I kept track of student grades … and by the end of the semester, student assignment quality improved, on average, by 15-25%! Their assignments improved by, at least, an entire letter-grade! Just based on my feedback and their hard work!

This is why I enjoy teaching – it’s not just about me, it’s not just about you. It’s about the both of us, working collaboratively for your success.

It’s the same reason, I enjoy reviewing and editing documents for others (peers and colleagues). I enjoy working behind the scenes to help other people succeed. This means my success depends on your success. If you want to work collaboratively, I’d love to hear from you! :D

Personal stories:

1st post: background and aim: Tags: Personal ruminations; Ecology and Evolution; Higher Education

Welcome! This post provides some background information and elaborates on my motivations . As you could see under the ‘musings’ header on the main page, this blog is divided (or, will be when I add more posts to it) into three categories—ecology and evolution, higher education and personal ruminations.

Each new piece of writing (post) that I upload will fall under, at least, one of these three categories. For example, I am a recent MSc graduate specializing in Ecology. When I talk about my research, it may fall under ‘ecology and evolution’ and ‘personal ruminations’. In graduate school, I also worked as a teaching assistant and so, if I reflect on my experiences as a TA, the article may fall under ‘higher education’ and ‘personal ruminations’. But, if I post an article about my experiences living in Nepal, Thailand, Canada or any of the other countries that I’ve lived in or visited, then, those will be personal and fall under ‘personal ruminations’.

For the ‘ecology and evolution’ and ‘higher education’ categories, I will summarise a journal article and reflect on it. I will be using a formal and professional tone in these articles.

Posts under ‘personal ruminations’ will be reflections on my experiences. These articles will be more friendly, and so I will use a casual tone. I don’t know whether I will be consistent in writing about and sharing my experiences. I don’t think it is the most fascinating thing to read… even if I can, easily, fill pages with my thoughts (no one has accused me of not talking enough \*grin\*). But, as with life, we’ll see what happens.

My main motivation for starting this blog is to have the ideas in articles be widely available, rather than being limited to academics and researchers. Until I formally studied the theory of evolution, I had no interest in biology. Studying about the digestive system, memorizing human anatomy and learning about reproduction never held any appeal for me. I want to share my interest so people have a better understanding of how interesting these fields (Eco and Evol, and Higher Ed) can be

Because I’ve done research in ecology, I could also go on for DAYS and PAGES about how amazing life in the field can be—hiking through mountains for days; getting ‘lost’ (my sense of direction is abysmal) and having to find our way back; watching a large female grasshopper start eating my field notebook when a male lands on top and starts mating with her; coming face to face with a black bear and her three cubs less than 20 ft away when I stood up to check what the thundering sound was; freezing in the cold when we misjudged the weather; trying to decipher our notes with the rain pouring down on us as we tried to collect sheep poo. Research and life in the field is so much more than what you imagine it could be when you take biology/ecology courses in school. very little that’ssettled

I didn’t enjoy taking biology courses until sophomore year at university and I want to share it with people.

As I’ve mentioned earlier, I could go on for DAYS, and PAGES about how many times, I’ve had a realization / reaffirmed my belief that biology is awesome. So, this is my attempt at restraining myself from fangirling over biology.

Research project in Cambodia

Have you ever lived in a country where there is only one person who speaks the same language as you, and who also refuses to talk to you about anything other than work? Yep, that was my main experience during the research project. It… gave me a lot of time to reflect on my life choices, made me go on facebook and prepared me for COVID-19 social distancing (although, I’m living with my bf, who HAS to talk to me, so it’s actually pretty good all things considered!).

Working and living in Switzerland

Living in Canada

Growing up in Nepal

Tags: Higher Education; Adult Education; Personal ruminations; Teaching philosophy

Learning about the theory of evolution was like finally getting a drink of cool, refreshing water after hiking for six hours under the unrelenting sun—finally, the world made sense! I had been struggling to understand human and animal motivations and behaviors. Learning that it was about the survival of the fittest helped put everything into perspective. At its core, life for all creatures is about survival and reproduction. Ants went from being annoying creatures that got into everything in our house to fascinating creatures with incredible social structures and behaviors; and tigers went from being vicious killers to magnificent creatures struggling to survive. This new appreciation for the subject and outlook on life helped me realise how much I wanted to teach this subject to others. When I started my Masters’ degree at the University of Calgary, I finally got the opportunity to work as a Teaching Assistant (TA). And I loved it—it was an absolute pleasure to see students grow and develop their understanding and writing skills over the semester.

My first course working as a TA was a scientific writing course. I motivates students by impressing on them the value of developing writing skills—regardless of who your employer is, everyone needs to write papers and reports. For some students that was motivation enough, but for others, they needed a more personal reason. They got their internal motivation when they got to write a final paper on a topic of their choosing. They wanted readers to understand what they were trying to say, and finally, realised that if they couldn’t get their ideas across to me and their instructors, they may not be able to get their ideas across to their future colleagues. They started to engage with the material, they participated in tutorials and asked thoughtful questions during one-on-one meetings that they requested.

This example also illustrates the importance of student choice in selecting a final project. When I think back to my learning experience as an undergrad, the topics and discussions that I remember best are the topics that I chose to work on, rather than the ones that the professor dictated for us. These final projects gave me an opportunity to actively apply some of the concepts that we’d learned in the course. By the end of the project, I was more motivated to learn than at the beginning of the semester! Seeing the same experience reflected in my students made me appreciate the importance of giving students the freedom to choose their final projects/essays.

Critical thinking as an essential skill that individuals need to develop. I challenge students to think outside of the material that they read, to question it, question the methodology and to think critically about the subject, rather than accepting that it must be good because it was published. For practice, I encouraged students to challenge not only each other’s ideas, but also my ideas. I turned it into a game and showed them that I welcomed their challenge to a) set an example and show them how to deal with challenges in a productive way and b) encourage a positive supportive environment where challenges were a way to help you develop your thinking. It worked! There was some hesitation in the earlier tutorials, but by the end, most groups had lively and fruitful discussions by challenging each other and trying to understand where the other person was coming from.

While I wanted to encourage a lively discussion, I also wanted to ensure that students were respectful of each other’s ideas and opinions. Creating this type of safe environment is crucial for developing critical thinking skills. So, in the first ten minutes of the first tutorial I made it very clear that the environment that I was trying to create was one of mutual respect and understanding–not just between the students and myself, but also between fellow students. I taught three sections. The first and last sections were open to discussions after the initial speech about creating a safe space, but it was a pain to get students in my middle section to speak out. Initially, I thought they just needed some time to get used to each other and that they would start participating in a week or two. But, after three weeks, they were still hesitant. So, I asked them what I could do to encourage participation since that was the entire point of the tutorials. A few students came up to me, after class, and mentioned that they were hesitant to participate because they were worried that they might offend people whose opinions differed from their own.

Taking what they had said into account, before beginning the fourth tutorial session for that section, I reiterated that this was a safe space, but I added that the tutorial was also a learning space. We would start with the basic assumption that no one wanted to hurt or offend anyone else, and if they did, then we could discuss it in a mature and respectful manner to understand what was offensive, so that everyone in the class learns the what and the why. After this intervention, participation in the class increased by more than two-fold! The following year, when I taught the same course, I made sure that the students realised, from the get-go, that safe space also means that when you make a mistake, we work through it together. That year, participation was high in all sessions from the beginning!

To summarize, my goal is for students to learn to think critically about any relevant topic and/or contemporary issue, consider the problem from multiple perspectives and make a strong case for their proposed solution. I also encourage students to be willing and flexible to adapt their views and plans based on valid arguments and recommendations, respectively—after all, problem solving, flexibility and adaptability are vital skills in any workplace.

Tags: Higher Ed; Personal Ruminations; SAGES poster

During the 2018/2019 academic year, I signed up for the SAGES program while working towards my Masters’ degree. SAGES is a program that teaches interested grad student at UofC how to be a more effective educator and communicator in STEM. Now, you may be thinking, aren’t you supposed to be providing us with the full form of the acronym? Yes, I really should. Just keep in mind that SAGES is an acronym with two other acronyms within it. Here it is:

SAGES SoTL Advancing Graduate Education in STEM

SoTL = Scholarship of teaching and learning

STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

In summary, ‘SAGES’ stands for “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Advancing Graduate Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math”.

In the first semester, I learned the theoretical concepts behind teaching and learning for example, how to provide feedback, how to align course learning outcomes and assignments, how to set learning objectives, how memory and learning works, how to actively engage students in their learning process. Then, in the second semester, I put some of these understanding into practice – I got to redesign a tutorial for the Conservation biology course. I had, previously, worked as a TA for that course and identified a specific tutorial that didn’t inspire much discussion among students.

In the previous year, I had noticed that most students were against hunting.

In fact, only 1-2 students per tutorial group seemed to be for, or at least, not as against hunting as the rest of the group. This meant that the discussions around this topic was very flat – any ‘rebellion’ against the popular idea of ‘hunting bad’ was quickly squashed. I was quite frankly, appalled that the students against hunting were not even interested in having a discussion – hunting was just bad in their eyes. And to me, it seemed like their thinking was limited to ‘killing is bad, therefore hunting is bad.’

I wanted to broaden students’ perspectives. My motivation to change the ‘hunting tutorial’ was to provide students with a wholistic view on hunting – the biological, social, economic and political aspects of hunting. Only then, in my opinion, could they form an informed opinion for or against hunting.

So, my aim for the redesigned tutorial was to provide different perspectives on the topic (the full poster is below). During the tutorial session, students were randomly assigned into two groups – for or against hunting. The students were also provided with a list of questions that they then had to think and argue with each other about. Mostly, students appreciated the change in format and valued the experience as it forced them to think about the opposing side’s arguments. Astonishingly, for me at least, a substantial percentage of the class changed their minds about hunting after the in-class debate! And it went both ways – students who had previously been against hunting, were now more accepting of it, while students who had previously been for hunting, were now against it. Although, if I’m being honest, more students became more accepting of hunting. And I’m saying ‘more accepting’ because they still didn’t actively support hunting, but they understood the positive impacts that good hunting practices can have. It was a conditional acceptance, not an unconditional approval.

UCalgary badges:

Git stuff:

Type ‘ls’ in the git bash <this should show a list of folders/documents>

Then, type ‘cd Documents’ to set the directory

‘ls’ – to check the folders/documents

‘cd [relevant folder name]’ – in this case it is ‘cd Teachingandlearning’ (also you can hit tab after the ‘teach’ and it will auto-complete

‘ls’ – to check the folders/documents

‘cd webpage’

‘ls’

‘cd test-site’

‘ls -a’ – the ‘-a’ will mean that I can see the hidden folders as well. So I should be able to see the ‘.git/’ folder

‘git status’ – will tell you the overall status: It will show a list of changes that you’ve made to the documents and a list of untracked files. All of these will be in RED ‘cos it has not been committed… and/or is untracked. When I did it the second time with matthew, it showed the msg “no changes added to commit (use “git add” and/or “git commit -a”)

‘git add .’ – adds everything in the folder on to the github site/your section/your (as in my) site

‘git status’ – at this point the branch should be up to date with ‘origin/master’. It will also show a list of changes that were added. Because it’s been added, it will show up in green. HOWEVER, it has NOT been committed yet!

‘git commit -m “imperative statement” – will commit the changes that you[I] just made and the imperative statement will show what the change will do. In this case it was “Make Matthew happy :D”. However, in the future, it should be something that gives me a better clue as to what the change is supposed to do.

‘git status’

‘git remote -v’ – will show you where you need to get the documents to work on and where you’re going to push new material. In this case, it should be the same, and I am ready for the next stage

‘git push’ – wait for a bit. It should show me a list of what it’s doing.

NOW, to get stuff down and work on it: Day 2:

‘git status’

‘git fetch’//’git pull’ – ‘git pull’ is the combination of ‘git fetch’ AND ‘git merge’

‘git status’

‘git merge’

‘bundle exec Jekyll serve’ – need to type this into the git bash to be able to see the website and the changes that I’m making to it, as I’m making ‘em.