Using the New Database for Submitting Written Work

From the spring semester of 2015 all students in IE Core will be required to upload their book reports to the new "Database of Student Writing." In addition, students in all levels of IE Writing will have to upload each draft of their paragraphs and essays (and the final version) to the database.

From the fall semester of 2015, students of Academic Writing (AW) also must upload all drafts of their AW theses, and the perfected version as well. In this way, we will rapidly build up a collection of student writing as a deterrent against some forms of plagiarism.

How students use the new database
for submitting their written work

Instruct students to go to: http://www.ap.agu4u.org/users/login (See Fig. 1).

They should login as follows:

                      Username :   student
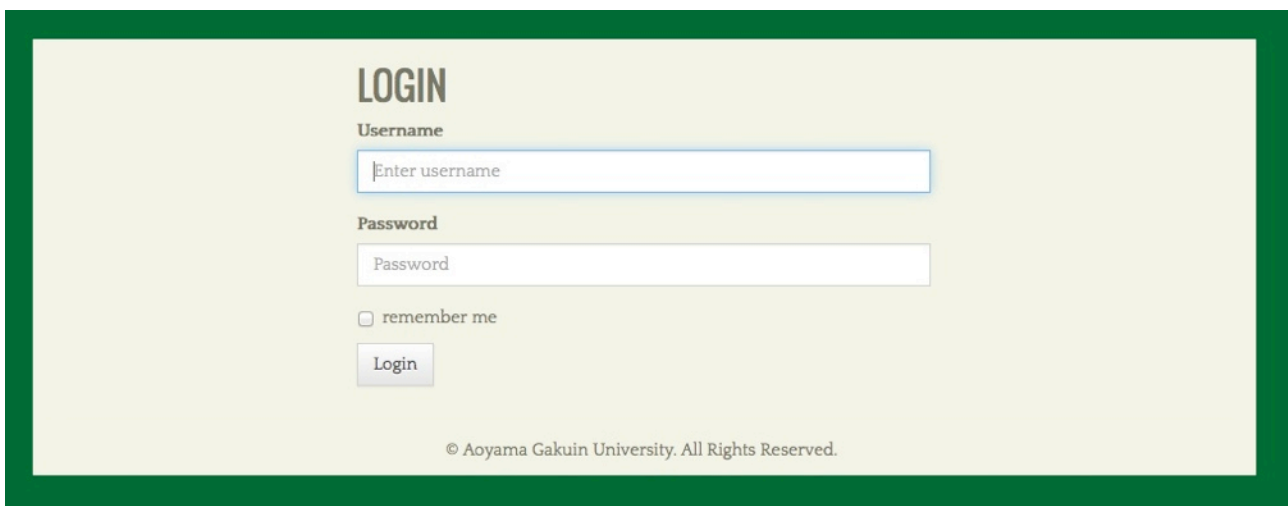   Password :   tGpUU5Cv

Fig. 1

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After logging in, they will be taken to an upload page (See Fig. 2) where they will have to browse for the file of their written work on their computer (See Fig. 3). They should also use drop down menus to select the course that they are enrolled in and the current semester/ year. Finally, they should type in their teacher's name and click on the "Upload file" button. At this time, only Microsoft Word .doc or .docx files can be uploaded.

NOTE: Students should be instructed to not include their name, student number, or any other identifying information in the filename or in the document itself. This is to ensure that privacy laws pertaining to electronically stored data are not violated.

Fig. 2

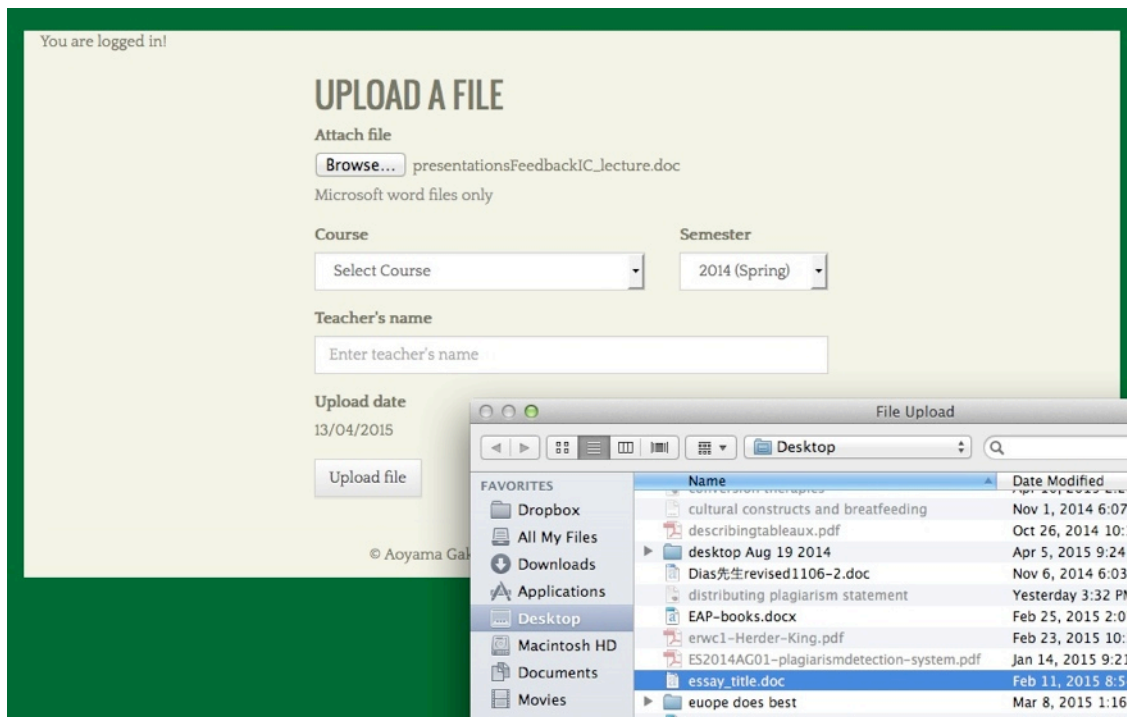# Using the New Database for Submitting Written Work

Fig. 3

After the student has selected the appropriate file on his/her computer and clicked the "Upload file" button, the file will be uploaded within a few seconds. Upon successfully uploading the file, a page will appear with the phrase "UPLOAD SUCCESSFUL." On that same page, a unique reference number will be provided along with the time and date of submission. [Currently the time is set at American Pacific Standard Time, but we will try to fix that.]

Students must print out the "UPLOAD SUCCESSFUL" screen (which includes their file's unique reference number--See Fig. 4) and present it to their teacher along with a hard copy of that written work. Students must not be given credit for an assignment if they have not shown evidence that they uploaded it to the "Database of Student Writing." That evidence will be a print out of the "UPLOAD SUCCESSFUL" screen.

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Fig. 4

How teachers will use the new database

The MS Word files of the students' submitted written work can be accessed at: http://www.ap.agu4u.org/users/login .

Teachers should login as follows:
>   Username : admin
>   Password : [ASK DIAS FOR IT]

[Teachers wishing to access the electronic files of their students' work should ask Joseph Dias for the administration password.]

The administration area of the database (See Fig. 5) will allow teachers to access a student's work by searching the database using the unique reference number provided to them when the student uploads the file of his/her written work.

At this point, the administrative features do not allow complex searches of the database or provide comparisons between aspects of a student's work and content already uploaded to the database, although there are plans to introduce those features in future phases of the project.

Teaching assistants will be asked to make periodic checks of the files uploaded to the database for instances of plagiarism and teachers will be informed of the reference numbers of essays suspected of plagiarism.

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Therefore, for the time being, all that teachers need to do is 1) to make sure that their students are submitting their book reports, essays, and theses to the database; and 2) to collect the reference numbers of those essays.

When the students submit the print outs of the reference numbers, be sure that they include their names with them so that you can match the student to the submitted file. Individual teachers will be the only parties able to match uploaded files to particular students due to the privacy safeguards built in to this system.

Fig. 5

So far, we have only completed the first of four phases of the plagiarism database project. Subsequent phases will allow for the bundling of essays submitted for specific classes; searching for substantial overlap between previously submitted documents and newly uploaded ones; checking for similarities between uploaded essays and publicly available Web content; and automatic notification to teachers when plagiarism is suspected in their students' essays.

At this point in its development, the database is mainly intended as a deterrent to plagiarism rather than as a highly effective tool for detecting it. It is important that teachers still follow their intuitions; conduct simple "Google" searches using strings of words from essays to rule out plagiarism from Web sources; and question students when their written work seems beyond their capacity or inconsistent with previously submitted samples.

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Finally, when a teacher does detect clear and indisputable evidence of plagiarism in student writing, (s)he is asked to report it to the IE Program coordinators at:

http://tinyurl.com/mum2goq

The plagiarism reporting page is a Google Form that looks like this:

Inappropriate appropriation

Teacher

Student's Name

Student's Number

Course

Semester / Full year
- Full-year course
- Spring Semester
- Fall Semester

Type of Assignment
- IE Writing Essay
- IE Core Book Report
- Academic Writing Thesis
- Graduation Thesis
- Active Listening Log
- Journal Entry
- Other

Draft or final version?
- Draft
- Final Submission
- Not Applicable

Reference # of writing assignment

Comments (e.g., extenuating circumstances)