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WTS 101.01: English Composition

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UM - Missoula - College of Technology
WTS 101
Autumn 2006
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Text

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, 7th ed., Axelrod and Cooper
Little, Brown Compact Handbook, 5th ed., Arron, Jane E.

“Knowing why an issue matters to you can help you make it matter to others”

John Ramage, “Writing Arguments”

Course Description

WTS 101 is designed to help you develop or continue to advance your abilities as a writer and reader of texts so that you can think critically and communicate effectively in the academic community and in the larger world. Students will make inquiries into different personal, academic, and civic contexts, and students will read and compose different genres, including traditional, electronic, and visual texts. WTS 101 will help you develop flexible reading, writing, and research processes to complement your progress as a college writer. Much of the work will involve different kinds of collaboration, including small group workshops and discussions that will take place in class, in conference, and in electronic forums. Students will come to understand that learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time—often unevenly—with continued practice and informed guidance. Finally, as a first-year writing course, 101 will help students locate themselves as critical thinkers, readers, and writers in an academic community.

Outcomes

This statement describes the common knowledge, skills and attitudes sought for students in WTS 101 at the University of Montana.

This document defines only “outcomes,” or types of results, and not “standards,” or precise levels of achievement sought for ENEX 101 students. Standards, determined by the grade descriptors included in the syllabus.

Learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and informed guidance. Therefore, it is important that students imagine these outcomes as describing areas they will learn about and practices in which they will engage.

This outcomes statement describes what students should strive to acquire by the end of first-year composition. It is divided into three categories: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, research, and writing processes; and knowledge of conventions.

Rhetorical Knowledge

By the end of first-year composition, students should be able to:

- Focus on a purpose appropriate to different writing situations, including different audiences
- Write in multiple genres with an awareness of how genres shape reading and writing situations
- Use specialized language from the discipline of composition to support learning

Critical Thinking, Reading, Research, and Writing Processes

Critical Thinking and Reading

By the end of first-year composition, students should be able to:

- Engage in inquiry as a means of learning, particularly strategies like exploration, explanation, evaluation, and reflection as inter-related means of inquiry.
- Understand reading as a recursive transaction between a reader and a text
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of learning
- Recognize that writing grows from “truth-seeking” and that writing is a social act
- Appreciate the challenges of communicating effectively across differences

Research and Writing Processes

By the end of first-year composition, students should be able to:

- Develop multiple, flexible strategies for writing, particularly inventing, drafting, copyediting
- Learn to give and receive feedback on written texts
- Understand research as a process of gathering, assessing, interpreting, and using different data to compose texts
- Use a variety of technologies to facilitate research and drafting

Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first-year composition, students should be able to:

- Use documentation appropriately and demonstrate an understanding of the logic of citation systems, especially MLA
- Control punctuation, grammar, syntax, and spelling

Policies and Procedures

Students will have, on average, at least one reading assignment for each class. Secondary reading assignments will be posted as needed.

There will be small-group work environments.

Attentive and active participation in class discussion and in group work are required as it is essential for accomplishing the course goals. You will be able to do this if you read the assigned material carefully and respond thoughtfully to that material. Keep current with the readings and writing assignments.

[Please note: Everyone suffers a certain amount of reticence when it comes to speaking to a group. Although this is a writing class, expressing your ideas as well as entertaining other points of view in a discussion forum never fails to create at least some fodder for your writing. Students are expected to take a strong interest in group discussions.]

For all major writing assignments, you will be expected to complete at least one first draft and one final draft.

You are invited to make individual appointments with me to talk about your ideas, about comments you don't understand, about problems you're having with learning in this class. Feel free to email me. I will respond as soon as possible. If you want to discuss any specific grade, please wait 24 hours, giving yourself time to consider my assessment and your response. Please bring all drafts (with or without grades and/or comments) to any conference about papers/grades.

No late papers will be accepted for evaluation. If we are past the due date, please do not ask to submit late, just move to the next draft. If you missed a final-draft deadline, you will receive an 'F' for that paper. [If under rare circumstances, I accept for any reasons a late paper, at least a half-grade reduction will apply.]

All papers should follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

Please note: this is a writing course and not a computer course; however, you will be expected to work with computers for class assignments, and correspondences will be conducted via email/Blackboard. With the exception of some initial explanations during our first classes, please do not expect extra time in class for any learning curve you might face with technology. Likewise, please do not expect any extensions on due dates for an assignment because of any technical difficulties you have not conquered. Backup all work.

Please read the policy statement on plagiarism in the University Catalogue.

<http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

In brief, plagiarism is any attempt to misrepresent another writer's work as your own. This includes scooping something off the Internet. It is expected that you will adhere to this policy.

Plagiarism of any sort will result in a course grade of F, and I will follow the disciplinary procedures as stated in the Student Conduct Code

<http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

Students may be asked for their research or sources at any time.

WTS 101 is only offered for traditional grades, A-F, and I will employ the 'plus & minus' option. No student taking WTS 101 should expect to receive an incomplete.

Auditors of WTS 101 must meet all requirements established for traditional-grade students.

Reminder: The dates for the last days to drop this class with and without a refund are posted on Cyberbear: <http://cyberbear.umt.edu/>

Students are responsible for all academic dates and deadlines for the semester.

Grading Criteria for Major Writing Assignments

I employ a plus/minus grading system. Valid grades and their point values per credit under the traditional grading system will be:

A	4.00	C+	2.33	D+	1.33
A-	3.67	C	2.00	D	1.00
B+	3.33	C-	1.67	D-	0.67
B	3.00			F	0.00
B-	2.67				

Note: A frequent student concern involves the timely return of papers and an awareness of grades: “Where I am in this class.” Although the concerns are valid, the process for an accurate and comprehensive reading, analysis, evaluation, response, and grade to each student text is complex and can be for writing faculty an intellectually, emotionally, and physically taxing responsibility. There is no valid, reasonable, or effective assessment and grading strategies for writing teachers that involve scantron-based, multiple-choice, or fill-in-the-blank testing practices. Although by midterm, you may know clearly and explicitly what ‘grade’ or ‘percentage’ you are holding in another class, the same may not be true in this writing class.

Thinking, reading, and writing processes are complex and occur over an extended period of time. The same is true for assessment and grading. The complexity of these processes is further complicated and compounded by the number of students any one writing faculty might be assigned in a semester. As the number of students increase, the hours needed to read, analyze, evaluate, and assess student texts grows higher and higher—I think any elementary exercise in a math class would substantiate this claim.

To mitigate this situation as much as I can, you may schedule a conference with me to discuss your writing. If I have sufficient writing from you, and I have had adequate time to read and to assess it, I will give you the most accurate and balanced assessment the semester’s constraints will permit.

Please verify grade values at the UM website for your own records.

Because students will be asked to do both expository and argumentative papers, the standards and rubrics for grading will vary. One staple of consistency will apply: the three elements of the rhetorical situation--message, audience, and writer--represent criteria connected inextricably to any act of writing

Please Note: To complicate matters—and to indicate to students the complexity of assessment and grading—all students should be familiar with the “Evaluative Criteria”

Used in the Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment.” The criteria may be viewed at the following web site:

<http://www.umt.edu/provost/writingassessment/criteria.htm>

I am willing to provide accommodations for students with special needs and circumstances with the proper verification from the Office for Disability Services.

Because the act of writing is both a truth-seeking and social act, writing classes will explore and discuss most readings and subjects from a variety of perspectives and will employ various theoretical and, at times, ethical frameworks. Although this can make for a politically-charged and/or emotional atmosphere, this class will welcome, respect, and make room for ideas and beliefs that are presented with an intelligent, informed, and considerate voice.

Major Writing Assignments

I Writing a Summary

Reading Critically: Annotating and Summarizing

Readings: Chp 12 **Catalog of Reading Strategies**, pp583 - 608

Argument: Taking a stance and persuading an audience

Writing Situations: the professional work place and/or the academy

II. Judgement Paper

Readings: Chp 8 **Justifying an Evaluation**, pp 391 - 449

Writing Strategy: Chp 18 **Compare and Contrast**, pp 671 – 676

III. Visual Rhetoric

IV. Arguing a Position

Readings: Chp 6 **Arguing a Position**, pp 261 - 326

Research required: one academic journal article or a popular magazine article

Invention Strategies: Chp 11 **Invention Strategies**, pp569 - 581

Writing Strategies: Chp 13 **Cueing the Reader**, pp 611 - 625

Research Strategies: Chp 21 **Library and Internet Research**, pp 709 - 746

Chp 22 **Using and Acknowledging Sources**, pp747 - 790

Grade Descriptors for WTS 101

A to A- Superior paper will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that goes beyond general expectations. A text at this level is a well-edited text representing an exceptional understanding of the assignment and a comprehensive understanding of the appropriate rhetorical strategies for the assignment and genre. Paper exhibits an error-free use of writing conventions, including mechanics. The paper demonstrates consistently a highly developed understanding of the connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The paper highlights the writer's attempt to construct a specific style and to take risks with the work.

B+ to B This paper meets the rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/conventions, including mechanics. The writer demonstrates some initiative and rhetorical sophistication although it may be inconsistent or uneven. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make numerous and significant choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

B- to C This paper represents consistent writing that meets the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination). Likewise, the text lacks a strong or consistent understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in the writing situations and genre. The writer composes across strategies, practices, and conventions at varying levels of success with mostly surface revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

C- to D This text does not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Text is brief and underdeveloped. The text reflects a writer's composing process that lacks complexity in terms of a rhetorical understanding specific to the genre. The writing calls for extensive revision, specifically to purpose, development, audience, and style and mechanics. The general writing does not present a text that is clear, effective, and convincing.

F Unacceptable writing: text exhibits pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, and style and mechanics. These issues interfere with the writer's expression of meaning and a reader's comprehension of the text. An unacceptable text is often incomplete. A specific text will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.