Guidelines for Teaching First-Year Composition at The University Of Tennessee, Knoxville

The Department of English is proud of its First-Year Composition program and the national recognition it has received, the “Writing Program Certificate of Excellence” from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). A video about our program is available on our website, http://english.utk.edu/first-year-composition/.

English 101 and 102 have core outcomes that all instructors aim to meet as well as a set of core assignments. Individual teachers have flexibility in designing their course schedule and the particulars of assignments as long as they carry out these objectives. To ensure consistency in our program, we also have some requirements. Teachers are responsible for carrying out the following course objectives and for meeting the following general requirements.

OVERVIEW of UTK’s FYC CURRICULUM

English 101 focuses primarily on argument, rhetorical analysis of how texts work, how and why writers make the choices they do, and the ways in which writers use their knowledge of the importance of audience, purpose, genre, context, and style to formulate their own rhetorical arguments. In English 102 students define legitimate questions for independent inquiry, learn how to conduct research using various types of source material, and produce original research projects.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FYC COURSES

- Require and evaluate 5000 words of writing, of which 3500 words are formal (typically 4-5 pg. papers, which may include in-class essays); informal assignments may include essay drafts and revisions, journals, reading responses, as well as in-class writings, such as freewritings, peer reviews, and group work assignments;
- Schedule two individual conferences with students to discuss drafts-in-progress and to address particular writing concerns. One of these may be completed through virtual means; up to 2 weeks of class time may be replaced by individual conference meetings;
- Engage students in writing processes, either by having students write multiple drafts of papers or sequencing assignments so that students work on individual components (e.g., introductions, support paragraphs, and conclusions) that lead up to the final written assignment.
- Familiarize students with the library, either through a visual or self-guided tour for English 101 and tutorials on conducting research and evaluating websites for English 102);
- Introduce students to methods of using and documenting sources;
- Introduce students to the research processes that involve identifying, gathering, and incorporating primary and secondary sources (mainly in English 102).

ENGLISH 101: COMPOSITION I (RHETORICAL ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENT)

Outcomes for English 101:

By the end of English 101, students should demonstrate the ability to:
• Read texts critically and analyze the varied situations that motivate writers, the choices that writers make, and the intended effects of those choices on readers;
• Analyze how writers employ content, structure, style, tone, and conventions appropriate to the demands of a particular audience, purpose, context, or culture;
• Write persuasive arguments that articulate a clear, thoughtful position, deploy support and evidence appropriate to audience and purpose, and consider counterclaims and multiple points of view, including international and intercultural perspectives;
• Respond constructively to drafts-in-progress, applying rhetorical concepts to revisions of their own and peers' writing;
• Analyze multiple modes of communication and the ways in which a wide range of rhetorical elements (both written and visual) and cultural elements operate in the act of persuasion;
• Evaluate sources and integrate the ideas of others into their own writing (through paraphrase, summary, analysis, and evaluation); and
• Write clearly and correctly, employing the conventions of Standard American English.

**English 101: Sequence of Units and Assignments**

*All teachers follow the 101 curriculum below, which was approved by the Composition Committee in 2014-15.*

In English 101, the overall arc of assignments over the semester moves students from analyzing others’ persuasive texts towards producing their own. There are four units, each with a required paper. The units should be taught in the sequence described here. See “English 101 Overview for Instructors” and “English 101 Assignments” for more detailed descriptions.

**Unit 1: Understanding Rhetorical Situations—Comparative Rhetorical Analysis**

The goals of the first course unit are for students to understand the elements of rhetorical situations; various rhetorical purposes (persuading audiences to accept new information or new insights, to affect their emotions or change their attitudes about a situation, to change their beliefs about something, and/or to prompt them to take some action); the rhetorical strategies writers use to persuade audiences; and to understand what makes an attempt at persuasion work or not, and why.

This unit of the course has at least two written assignments:
1. Two “rhetorical situation analysis reports.”
2. A formal paper in which students compare the rhetorical effectiveness/appropriateness of two texts—how likely each is to accomplish its rhetorical purpose (to influence the intended audience in a particular way).

In this unit, the instructor selects the texts for students to analyze and compare for the rhetorical situation analysis reports and formal paper. It is best to select texts that are related to the debate students will explore in Unit 2.

In-class instruction includes an overview of the goals of the English 101 course; the concept of reading as “entering the conversation”; the difference between what a text *says* and what a text *does*; the elements of rhetorical situations and persuasion—exigency, kairos, rhetorical purpose, context, genre, audiences, discourse community, appropriateness, and the rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos; and how to write a formal rhetorical analysis.

**Unit 2: Understanding Rhetorical Situations—Debate Analysis**

The goal of Unit 2 is for students to gain a thorough understanding of what a particular ongoing debate is about, what the compelling issues at stake are, and where common ground and disagreements exist. (They will develop their own position within the Unit 2 debate in their Unit 3 [and possibly Unit 4] paper). This unit will help students become productive rhetors by identifying the issues of the debate (via stasis analysis) and acknowledging where to enter an ongoing conversation. Unit 2 should be linked to Unit 3.

Students read *text the instructor has selected* with the goal of identifying what the argument is about and the nature of the unresolved issues that keep people talking about it actively. The selected readings should fall under a particular research question. *The New York Times* “Room for Debate” is helpful resource.
This unit of the course includes at least 3 written assignments:
(1) A “Identify the Questions at Issue in an Ongoing Debate” worksheet
(2) An annotated bibliography of instructor-provided readings
(3) A formal “Debate Analysis” paper in which students inform the audience about the levels of argumentation in an ongoing debate.

In-class instruction includes how to identify levels of argumentation (see “four questions of issue” handout) within an ongoing debate, rhetorically analyze the debate; connect multiple authors’ arguments to show consensus, dissent, or discussion; and locate where a rhetor should intervene in the debate.

**Unit 3: Composing Arguments for an Academic Audience**

Once students have learned how other writers use rhetorical appeals to persuade particular audiences (Unit 1) and have analyzed the common ground and the questions at issue in the ongoing debate the class examined in Unit 2, they should be ready to enter the conversation (Unit 2) and develop a rhetorical argument for an academic audience. Students should use appropriate rhetorical appeals to accomplish a rhetorical purpose that productively enters the debate.

Unit 3 includes at least 2 written assignments (#3 below is recommended but optional)
(1) A Position Paper Proposal
(2) A formal paper, “Position Paper for an Academic Audience”
(3) A Reflective Essay (recommended but optional)

In-class instruction in this unit offers an extended discussion of genre, discourse communities, and audience (which would have come up earlier in Units 1 and 2 when considering the rhetorical elements of the assigned readings), with particular attention given to what academic readers expect. Class instructional time includes teaching students how to develop persuasive arguments using effective rhetorical appeals appropriate for academic readers and how to write a proposal for a position paper. Instruction also includes how to find relevant, credible sources (including introduction to the University Libraries), how to integrate them effectively and properly in academic papers, including instruction in quoting, paraphrasing, citing, listing sources in the Works Cited page, what plagiarism and patchwriting are and how to avoid them, and the consequences of plagiarism.

**Unit 4: Composing Arguments for a Public Audience**

Now that students have practiced using rhetorical appeals to persuade an academic audience to accept their position, they will now be asked to put their rhetorical skills to a different use by attempting to persuade a public (preferably local) audience. They will stake out a position on a local debate related to the general issue the course has been following—or another that the instructor approves—and will use the rhetorical strategies they’ve learned throughout the semester to convince that public audience to accept new information or insights, change their minds about something, or prompt them to take some kind of action. Instructors could choose to have students produce a print essay like a letter to the editor or editorial. Alternately, instructors could choose to have students compose a digital, new media, or multimodal text, such as a webpage, podcast, or YouTube video.

Unit 4 includes at least 2 written assignments (#3 below is optional)
(1) A Genre Analysis
(2) A A Public Argument”
(3) A Reflective Essay (recommended but optional)

In-class instruction should continue the discussion of genre, discourse community, and audience, with particular attention given to what public readers of particular genres expect. Also, continued instruction should be offered in how develop persuasive arguments using rhetorical appeals designed to influence particular readers and how to find relevant, credible sources, integrate source material using quotation and paraphrase, cite properly, and how to avoid plagiarism.

**ENGLISH 102: COMPOSITION II (RESEARCH-INFORMED WRITING)**

English 102 focuses on research-informed writing. It is designed to give students insight into and familiarity with the ways different disciplinary communities produce knowledge. Rather than teaching “generic” library
research, instructors guide students in considering subjects using a range of methods, sources, media, and genres appropriate to different expert and disciplinary communities. Building on English 101, 102 maintains a focus on teaching students to identify, analyze, and use rhetorical concepts and strategies to understand, conduct, and share research with both general and specialized audiences. Going beyond English 101, 102 introduces students to some of the ways people in other (non-English) disciplines conduct research, from posing valid research questions in different contexts, to identifying and analyzing relevant and credible sources, and to presenting information, analysis, and conclusions to different types of audiences.

A distinct characteristic of UTK’s English 102 course is the way instructors position typical research assignments within specific disciplinary contexts, linking basic research activities to specified methods, disciplines, and contexts. Archival, qualitative, and secondary source research methods are part of all courses, though individual instructors design their own inquiry topic for students to explore. The course takes research beyond basic library work to include data collection and research in specialized or disciplinary archives and resources. Students should learn, especially, how to construct knowledge from primary source material, including from persons, and present it well—moving beyond a “cut and paste” approach to handling sources material.

New teachers submit proposals to the Composition Office outlining the design and focus of their particular “inquiry” topic prior to teaching the course. Information about the 102 proposal process is on Bb.

**Outcomes for English 102:**

*By the end of English 102, students should demonstrate the ability to:*

- Read texts critically to identify, define, and evaluate complex problems and issues, taking into account multiple points of view and varying disciplinary and cultural contexts;
- Frame research questions that will guide formal inquiry;
- Select appropriate research methods using primary and secondary sources;
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, and/or timeliness) primary and secondary research materials;
- Present research effectively for academic audiences, providing evidence-based support for claims, integrating information effectively into an argument, and using appropriate disciplinary genre conventions and/or design features for different kinds of texts;
- Use citation and documentation conventions systematically and accurately within their own work;
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities;
- Give and act upon productive feedback to work in progress;
- Reflect on the development of their composing practices and how those practices influence their work; and
- Write clearly and correctly, employing the conventions of Standard American English.

**English 102 Course Units**

The English 102 curriculum includes three required course units. Individual instructors may determine the sequence in which these are taught. Rhetoric of Inquiry, 4th edition. The formal papers should require at least 3,500 words, with at least 1,500 additional words for annotated bibliographies, research proposals, rough drafts, and in-class writing.

**Secondary Source Research Paper**

Students pose and investigate a research question or problem by doing secondary source research. Students refine their particular research question by reading secondary materials and then use various sources (secondary sources and, if desired, primary and/or qualitative sources) to investigate their question. They may be asked to present their work using a genre appropriate to a particular audience and purpose (so, they may be asked to write a website or pamphlet for a particular audience, for instance, or to use a genre appropriate to a particular discipline). A major objective is that students learn how to find, synthesize, and integrate secondary source material into their written work and how to cite and document sources properly, including developing a solid understanding of how to avoid plagiarism.

**Archival Research Paper**
Students investigate a question about the history of a subject or issue by analyzing a collection of archival/primary source materials. The assignment should ask students to explore a collection of materials from a particular (past) time period and may ask them to compare materials from the past to those of the present (diachronic analysis) or to draw conclusions about a single time period (synchronic analysis). To arrive at an answer to their research question, students will analyze such primary materials as museum collections, newspapers, historical accounts of past events, public records/documents, letters, biographies.

**Qualitative Research Paper**

Students investigate a question about people's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (what they think and feel; how they understand things), and people's experiences (what people do and how they do it). Students use the qualitative research tools of interviews, surveys, and/or observations. Most assignments ask students to present the results of their inquiries using the conventions of social science research articles.

**Specific activities in English 102 include:**

**Initial Reading and Inquiry.** Analysis of texts to introduce students to "ongoing conversations" within a particular subject. Students do critical and reflective reading that focuses on questions at issue, writers' perspectives, assumptions, positions, and strategies of argument.

**Problem Identification and Preliminary Research.** Identification of research problems and development of research questions. Students might complete research proposals and initial annotated bibliographies while they conduct background research to find fruitful areas for inquiry on assigned topics.

**Directed Instruction in Disciplinary Research Methods.** Introduction to research methodologies and sources characteristic of various academic disciplines. Teachers assign papers for each unit (archival/historical research, qualitative research, secondary source research) that draw on particular methods for gathering and synthesizing data, or they may choose to assign papers that ask writers to utilize multiple methods that intersect or overlap. Within each research unit, students do one or more of the following as part of the research process: annotated bibliography, evaluation of sources, and presentations/discussions of developing knowledge/hypotheses (synthesis of knowledge gained from sources).

**Extended Independent Research Projects.** Extended research projects, written up following an appropriate genre from an academic discipline, to develop understanding of audience, purpose, genre, and appropriate discipline-specific standards for gathering and presenting knowledge and evidence. For the unit on archival/historical inquiry, students might write historical reports/essays (including visual essays) or oral histories. For the qualitative research unit, teachers assign projects that integrate data from interviews, surveys, or observations, written up using genres from the social sciences, such as research articles or mini-ethnographies. The secondary source research unit allows students to work on a project that uses scholarly sources students discover through Library database and stacks searches; such projects often include research from their disciplinary field(s) of interest.

Throughout, there is an emphasis on writing processes, including asking students to produce working and final drafts and revisions based on instructor feedback, with an emphasis on rhetorical effectiveness, stylistic improvement, proofreading and correctness, and proper use of source material and citation/documentation.

Please see “Course Policies and Syllabus Guidelines” for more specific course information.