

Lower Division Learning Goals

Introduction to WRT 105 and WRT 205

This revision of the lower division course goals reflects how instructors have been teaching analysis, argument, and critical research for the last couple of years and how the work of the program's Diversity Initiative, a three year grant from the Chancellor's Fund for Diversity, has also shaped our theory and practice. This grant has facilitated the Writing Program's intensive and imaginative exploration of various ways in which an engagement with issues of diversity, difference, and community has become more central to our work in an increasingly globalized, technologically mediated, and economically stratified world.

We believe that this enterprise has particular importance to the lower division curriculum. The development of writing skills requires that students become rhetorically flexible, which involves cultivating their awareness of many factors that shape the diverse perspectives and histories of the audiences they encounter. We have explored diversity as a topic of inquiry, as classroom interactions and dynamics, as awareness of rhetorical context, and as composing (especially invention, arrangement, form).

The Lower Division Committee's decision to highlight diversity in the lower division curriculum reflects our conviction that this approach has important benefits and exciting possibilities for writing instructors and students.

We are grateful to Vice-Chancellor Deborah Freund, the Center for the Study of Teaching and Learning, Writing Program Director Carol Lipson, and the Writing Program Diversity Committee for their support in our efforts to strengthen the lower-division curriculum in these important ways.

The purpose of these courses is to teach students strategies of critical academic writing in various genres, including analysis, argument, and researched writing. We help students develop ideas through the choices they make as writers--from invention to making and supporting claims to sentence-level editing to designing finished print and digital texts. We also challenge students to understand that effective communication requires people to be aware of the complex factors that shape every rhetorical context, including issues of power, history, difference, and community. Effective writers understand the histories and knowledges that shape the positions from which they write, and that inform the perspectives of various audiences, and they recognize that writing as a true communicative act may potentially change the perspectives of both the writer and audiences. Developing this understanding will help students perceive ways in which their work as writers extends beyond the immediate requirements of the classroom and prepares them for effective engagement with issues in the workplace, local community, and global society.

WRT 105

WRT 105 focuses on the rhetorical strategies, practices, and conventions of critical academic writing.

Goal #1: Students will compose a variety of texts as a process (inventing, drafting, revising, editing) that takes place over time, that requires thinking and rethinking ideas, and that addresses diverse audiences and rhetorical contexts.

Practices:

- Students will practice methods of invention, ranging from freewriting and brainstorming to heuristic exercises that guide them in gaining a historical perspective, recognizing the complexity of rhetorical contexts, and understanding the concept of subject position. These methods will encourage their recognition of the complex factors that shape their current positions and will promote their discovery and appreciation of diverse perspectives that can usefully inform their understanding of a topic.
- Students will practice strategies for composing, revising, and editing texts, with attention to how those strategies facilitate their thinking and their constructive engagement with particular audiences and rhetorical contexts.
- Students will collaborate and do small group work as part of their composing process.
- Students will write a series of informal assignments (e.g., summary, response, paraphrase, annotation) as part of their composing process, and at least three sustained, finished texts.
- Students will assess their process, evaluating the choices they made and noting the changes they would like to incorporate into their composing process in the future.
- Students will learn to address editing questions in relation to audience, genre, and rhetorical context.
- Students will experiment with form and design of texts in relation to audience, genre, and rhetorical context.

Goal #2: Students will develop a working knowledge of strategies and genres of critical analysis and argument.

Practices:

- Students will practice generating ideas and developing critical claims.
- Students will learn to support critical claims with a range of evidence, such as anecdote, illustration, statistics, analogy, signs, and images.
- Students will learn to interpret evidence, including visual images, and to assess the validity of specific types of evidence within particular rhetorical contexts.
- Students will develop an understanding of the features that distinguish analysis from argument and of the elements they share in common.

- Students will demonstrate a critical awareness of how their work as writers is influenced by their own positions, the diverse array of assumptions held by other audiences, and particular academic conventions.

Goal #3: Students will learn critical techniques of reading through engagement with texts that raise issues of diversity and community and encourage students to make connections across difference.

Practices:

- Students will read sustained, intellectually challenging texts rhetorically, to assess how writers make and support claims, sustain arguments and analyses, position themselves in relation to audiences, and write their way into complex issues.
- Students will learn strategies of *close reading* (e.g., paraphrasing a key passage, or tracing a line of argument through the syntax of a sentence, or developing from context the definition of a key word or concept).
- Students will learn strategies of *critical reading* (e.g., assessing major claims and conclusions, determining authorial position, evaluating evidence).
- Students will learn strategies of *inventive reading* (e.g., looking for the larger frameworks or debates or conversations that a text is addressing, and learning to ask questions and pursue new lines of thought).

Goal #4: Students will include critical research in their composing processes.

Practices:

- Students will learn to do research that supports their exploration of their chosen topics. They will develop a range of secondary research strategies, including quick internet searches for invention, more focused searches in the library's databases, and methods for evaluating sources. They may also learn some primary research strategies (e.g., interviews, surveys, observation, archival work).
- Students will learn to synthesize and integrate sources into their writing, including understanding when and how to cite quotations and paraphrases. They will also learn the appropriate use of MLA or APA documentation conventions.

WRT 205

WRT 205 focuses on the rhetorical strategies, practices, and conventions of critical academic researched writing.

Goal #1: Students will compose texts that investigate a focused topic of inquiry that raises issues of diversity and community and that offers multiple points of entry based on their interest and expertise.

Practices:

- Students will practice methods of invention that will help them explore multiple questions pertaining to the topic of inquiry and define the boundaries of their research projects.
- Students will develop strategies of collaboration, such as class discussion, group work, discussion boards, web logs, and group presentations.
- Students will write a series of informal assignments (e.g. summary, response, paraphrase, annotations, bibliography, source reviews) to help them synthesize their thinking about the topic.
- Students will develop rhetorical flexibility through experimenting with different principles and practices of design.
- Students will develop strategies for effectively integrating multiple sources into their texts.
- Students will apply their skills in composing, revising, and editing texts to develop at least three sustained written projects that are supported by a range of sources and media. At least one of these projects will be a formal research paper at least 10-12 pages in length.

Goal #2: Students will develop a working knowledge of strategies and genres of critical research.

Practices:

- Students will learn and analyze critically multiple research strategies (e.g., interviews, online, library, database) and will develop more extensive knowledge of library databases.
- Students will learn methods of collaborative research.
- Students will learn more than one genre of the research text, such as essays, reports, white papers, editorials, and web-based documentation.
- Students will practice conventions of quotation and citation for varied sources using the guidelines of various disciplines, such as APA and MLA.
- Students will analyze (e.g., in class discussions, in short assessed writing assignments) the potentials and problems of academic research and writing, including issues of audience, style and language, and rhetorical situation.

Goal #3: Students will learn critical techniques of reading through engagement with research-based texts.

Practices:

- Students will apply their critical reading skills to researched texts, assessing how writers make and support claims, sustain arguments and analyses, position themselves in relation to audiences, and write their way into complex issues.
- Students will practice critical reading of a range of texts, such as print, online, film, images, etc.
- Students will learn strategies of reading texts across disciplines and will discover ways of integrating diverse perspectives into their investigation of the topic.
- Students will strengthen their strategies for assessing the validity of sources across many genres and disciplines.