

Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program

Learning Objectives for Primary Writing Requirement Courses

WRT 103 & 104, WRT 105, WRT 105E, WRT 105 A & B

Across all academic communities, writing, speaking, and argument enable us to discover, develop, test, and communicate our ideas. To help students develop as academic communicators, the Primary Writing Requirement courses build rhetorical knowledge, which involves “the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts” (<http://wpacouncil.org/framework>)¹. The objectives below explicate the processes, knowledge, practices, and textual features central to effective academic writing. Our aim is to help students develop as thinking, flexible writers.

Effective Writing Processes

The writer, through a variety of assignments,

- Recognizes that all writers—even the most experienced writers—begin with a “working” draft and rely heavily on revision
- Develops a range of strategies for the composing process (e.g., brainstorming, freewriting, mapping, talking, getting feedback from readers, etc.)
- Drafts, reviews, and revises to discover, develop, and refine the writer’s ideas
- Draws on reflection and feedback to consider how well the text communicates the writer’s intended meaning
- Revises and edits to meet the expectations of the rhetorical situation

Critical Awareness of One’s Rhetorical Situation

The writer, through a variety of reflective activities (e.g., written reflections, genre analysis, discussing writing choices in class or in conferences),

- Considers the audience’s knowledge, needs, and expectations
- Demonstrates awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as a writer
- Reflects on how writing choices may or may not transfer across disciplines and to different rhetorical situations

The composition

- Is accompanied by written reflection that helps the writer make purposeful choices and manage revision

Strength of Argument

The writer

- Understands academic argument as a process of critical inquiry
- Uses argument to develop a perspective on an issue in the context of the larger academic conversation

The composition

- Poses an authentic question or problem
- Develops a debatable thesis that responds to the question or problem
- Uses argument and counterargument to develop, evaluate, and revise the thesis
- Supports argument and counterargument with credible and relevant evidence and sources

¹ Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2014

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Working with Sources

The writer understands the importance of and has gained practice with

- Citing **all** sources used in the composition
- Using all sources honestly and ethically (e.g., scholarly texts, Wikipedia, TED talks, blogs, screenshots, performances, peer contributions, faculty lectures and course materials, etc.)
- Identifying, evaluating, and selecting sources appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Developing strategies for keeping track of sources and source ideas so that they can be fairly represented and properly cited
- Identifying and using resources that support the research process (e.g., outreach librarians, databases, source management systems)

The composition

- Draws on sources to help motivate and develop a question or problem
- Contributes to an academic conversation through synthesizing, evaluating, and building on others' ideas, while ensuring that the writer's perspective guides the text
- Based on the rhetorical situation, appropriately balances summary and critical analysis of source material
- Uses clear *signals* (e.g., in-text citations, signal phrases) to differentiate the writer's ideas from the source material
- Provides the *pathway* to **all** sources used in the composition (e.g., through citation and bibliographic information)

Writer's Textual Choices

The writer

- Recognizes that writers have choices
- Recognizes that all choices shape the writer's meaning and reader's understanding
- Through reading and writing, has practice identifying, using, and evaluating different rhetorical choices (e.g., organizational structure, language use, genre, and mode)

The composition demonstrates effective rhetorical choices in

- Composition structure (e.g., organization/ordering of sections, paragraphs and sentences; logical flow and topic development; relationship between given and new information; arranging media elements)
- Language use (e.g., personal voice, academic voice, degree of conformity to standard edited English, code-meshing, amount of technical language)