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ENGLISH CURRICULUM HANDBOOK UNIFIED WRITING CURRICULUM

English Curriculum Review Committee Writing Program Faculty
June, 2004

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this overview of writing courses at Rutgers-Newark. The seriousness with which Rutgers faculty regard their students' writing can be seen in the number of required writing courses, the kinds of support accompanying them, and the care with which they are sequenced to provide appropriate and manageable challenges at each level.

Writing courses at Rutgers-Newark are designed to give students guidance and experience in the writing that will be asked of them throughout their college careers. That writing is largely based on academic reading. All Rutgers-Newark writing courses engage students in the difficult and important work of writing accurately, analytically, and argumentatively about readings.

First-year students may be placed in Communication Skills 142, Communication Skills 143, or English

Composition 101. Placement is determined by a combination of factors: Verbal SAT score, the grammar portion of the Rutgers' placement exam, and a writing sample. Students beginning with Communication Skills 142 usually proceed to Communication Skills 143, and students placed in Communication Skills 143 to English 101. All students must take English 101 and 102, or their equivalents.

Students successfully completing English 102 satisfy their composition requirement. But their writing requirement continues. All students must also complete a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum requirement by taking two upper-level courses identified as writing-intensive. At least one of these writing intensive courses must be taken with a student's major field of study.

Transfer Students must also complete the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum requirement by taking two writing-intensive courses. In addition, transfer students may be held for one or more writing courses prior to their writing-intensive courses. Students who have not received grades of "B" or better in two college composition courses must take a placement exam, and on the basis of that exam, they may be exempted from further composition, or they may be required to take either one or two writing classes: Expository Writing 121 and Expository Writing 122.

All Rutgers writing courses are designed to help students build competence in five broad areas: critical thinking, close reading, writing strategically, grammatical control, and research ability. Specific competencies in each of these general areas are detailed in the course descriptions that follow.

All Rutgers-Newark 100-level writing courses include exit exams. Students in each course must be able to perform at a passing level in that course's exam in order to be eligible for their next writing course. Each final exam asks students to write an essay in response to a focused question about a representative reading. A student's final exam essay may not represent that student's finest writing of the semester, but it should embody a realistically high minimum achievement. Writing teachers recognize that a single, timed writing exam does not provide the fullest indication of what students can do as writers: in fact their courses are designed to encourage students to work on writing projects over time, with opportunities for rethinking, for getting advice, and for editing. Nevertheless, writers also need to show they can deliver competent performances under time constraints. Thus writing courses at Rutgers-Newark give students experience both in writing over time and writing under pressure.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

COMMUNICATION SKILLS 142: BASIC WRITING AND READING STRATEGIES

Course Descriptions

This course calls for intensive work in basic reading and writing, correctly and effectively managing sentences, evaluating word choices, effectively developing paragraphs, maintaining coherence, recognizing main ideas, drawing upon sources informatively, and reading with accuracy. The course emphasizes writing and revising as means of understanding and of expressing complex thinking.

Course Goals

In Communication Skills 142 students will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

A. Critical Thinking

Understand and apply ideas presented in class;
Recognize and elaborate differing points of view;
Connect course material to personal experience;
Articulate both receptivity and resistance to arguments;
Respond constructively to peers.

B. Reading

Demonstrate the ability to read a short passage and to identify the author's thesis or argument and explain how the parts contribute to the whole;
Identify and define unfamiliar words in a text, including familiar words used in unfamiliar ways;
Use a dictionary effectively;
Monitor reactions as readers, noting how particular words alter general expectations;
Explain how a writer keeps a text coherent, paying special attention to signal words;
Recognize and comment upon the implications of particular word choices;
Test generalizations about a text by close examination of that text;
Find connections between current reading and personal experience, including previous reading experience;
Distinguish narratives and exposition from arguments and recognize when narratives and exposition are being used in service of argument;

Skim daily newspapers, choosing pieces to summarize.

C. Writing

Develop coherent paragraphs that signal a main idea and support it with effective details and reasoning;

Use appropriate transitions to effectively link sentences and paragraphs cohesively;

Develop an awareness of audience, making word choices accordingly;

Use effective sentence structures, including forms of parallelism and subordination;

Develop a repertoire of revising strategies;

Begin to develop a working vocabulary for analyzing writing (e.g., argument, summary, quotation, refutation, qualifiers, assumptions, implications, thesis, support)

Begin to find a comfortable voice for expressing complex ideas;

Conduct, by mid-semester, a portfolio analysis (of the writing for the course to date)

D. Grammar

Be able to use a handbook, grammar-check, or other resources to help edit writing;

Develop a working vocabulary for analyzing writing grammatically (e.g., subject, verb, phrase, clause, modifier, noun, preposition, possessive)

Demonstrate a full range of verb structures, including progressive and perfect tenses, passive voice, auxiliaries, infinitives, participles, and irregular verb forms;

Show a recognition of subject/verb agreement errors, including the errors frequently associated with the –s form of subjects and verbs;

Show an ability to correctly handle possessive forms;

Develop a repertoire of editorial skills, practice that editing upon others' writing as well as one's own;

Demonstrate an editorial awareness of conspicuous usage errors, including homophone mistakes (it's/its, then/than, their/there);

Develop an awareness of how the initial words of a sentence forecast and limit the structure of what can follow, showing how grammar shapes readers' expectations;

Conduct a portfolio analysis of the course's writing that includes particular attention to grammatical issues.

E. Research

Review techniques for the presentation of information, including summaries, paraphrases, and quotations;

Evaluate how course readings demonstrate the research that stands behind them;

Show where course readings show the need for further research;

Consider the interview as a research form;

Show a general awareness of how to use the Rutgers Library system;

Be ready to speak about the strengths and weaknesses of the Internet in research.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS 143: ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

Course Descriptions

This course provides introductory work in the forms academic reading and writing that will be required in other college courses. The course calls for expository writing based on non-fiction readings. It emphasizes the development of critical reading skills and the ability to present complex ideas and information to a defined audience in precise language. The course is designed to provide strong preparation for the work that will be expected of students in English 101.

Course Goals

In Communication Skills 143 students will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

A. Critical Thinking

Demonstrate the ability to explain abstract ideas;

Extract generalizations, assumptions, and implications from a reading;

Formulate reasoned responses to questions;

Recognize "loaded language," word choices that are meant to slant the understanding of an issue;

Show how the awareness of a particular audience—or the lack of such awareness— influences a presentation;

On a given issue, imagine alternative points of view.

B. Reading

Demonstrate the ability to effectively read a passage of moderate length;
Explain how sections of a text contribute to a central purpose;
Identify the thesis of a reading or where an explicit thesis is lacking, state the reading's implicit thesis;
Identify unfamiliar words and attempt to define what they mean in context;
Tentatively identify a text's key words, modifying your choices upon re-reading;
Evaluate the coherence of a text, pointing out connections and gaps;
Monitor readers' expectations in moving through a reading;
Comment upon a text's implied audience;
Note the strategies by which a writer seeks to establish credibility with readers;
Skim daily newspapers with an eye toward summarizing them and commenting on the perspectives from which they were written.

C. Writing

Establish a clear thought pattern that a reader can follow without difficulty both from sentence to sentence and throughout an essay;
Provide effective transitions between and within paragraphs;
Find a specific focus within a general topic;
Choose accurate and specific vocabulary;
Show a writer's awareness of specific audiences;
Effectively employ sentence patterns of parallelism and subordination;
Effective edit for clarity and conciseness;
Employ summary, paraphrase, and quotation;
Experiment with a variety of strategies for opening and closing essays;
Move persuasively between generalizations and support for those generalizations;
Develop a good, working vocabulary for speaking about writing;
Develop an effective set of editorial skills for working with the writing of peers;
Develop a comfortable and appropriate academic voice;
Conduct an analysis of a portfolio of writing.

D. Grammar

Use a handbook, grammar-check, and other resources in editing writing;
Develop and use an effective vocabulary for speaking about grammatical issues;
Employ a full range of verb structures, including progressive and perfect tenses, passive forms, auxiliaries, participles, infinitives, and irregular verb forms;
Demonstrate control of subject/verb agreement;
Demonstrate control of pronoun reference and of possessive forms;
Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the use of commas and semicolons;
Show an awareness of representative usage confusions in academic writing (e.g., affect/effect, imply/infer, compliment/complement, illusion/allusion, effect/affect);
Conduct a review of grammatical issues within the context of a portfolio analysis.

E. Research

Write essays that blend the discussion of a primary source with a properly documented secondary source;
Evaluate, or discuss the difficulty of evaluating, the research that stands behind readings;
Demonstrate effective uses of summary, paraphrase, and quotation within arguments;
Show how to acknowledge the work of others and how to manage citations;
Show an awareness of variations in documentation styles (the contrast between MLA and APA styles, for example);
Show familiarity with the Rutgers Library system;
Show an awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of Internet research.

ENGLISH COMPOSITION 101: ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENT

Course Description

This course calls for analytical writing based on non-fiction readings. Students are expected to develop a critical understanding of argument, both in the recognition of the strategies of other writers and in the effective management of their own. Students must demonstrate the ability to write accurately, coherently, and thoughtfully about representative academic readings. The course also emphasizes strategies of revision and editing.

Course Goals

In English Composition 101 students will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

A. Critical Thinking

Recognize explicit and implicit arguments;
Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments;
Recognize the persuasive appeals, such as appeals to emotion and the appeals to authority;
Address underlying assumptions;
Evaluate relationships between claims and support for claims;
Understand the use of qualifiers;
Learn to effectively manage the terminology of critical thinking, including, for example, the words used above: "implicit," "appeal," "assumption," "claim," "support," and "qualifiers."

B. Reading

Demonstrate an ability to read texts of both moderate and extended length;
Make claims about a text and support those claims with textual evidence;
Evaluate the coherence of a text;
Use dictionaries in service of critical reading;
Monitor reader responses, the expectations a reader develops in the process of reading;
Take into account the audience for which a text seems to be written;
Identify strengths and weaknesses in the writing of peers;
Recognize how a writer's word choices contribute to his or her argument;
Recognize the operation of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals;
Show an awareness of how non-verbal elements, such as pictures and graphs, contribute to the argument of a text and require close reading;
Differentiate facts from opinions, but also show an awareness of how facts are almost always selectively presented and seldom neutral;
Show an awareness of how to critically read statistics, alert to what they say and don't say;
Make judgments about writers' tones of voice and how their tones contribute to their arguments;
Demonstrate the ability to read the same text in different ways, commenting on why both readings are plausible if not equally persuasive;
Recognize and comment upon a writer's use of the passive voice;
Show a critical awareness of writers' uses of comparisons and analogies;
Show the abilities to skim, summarize, and speak about newspaper articles written at the level of The New York Times;
Develop the editorial ability to re-read writing with the needs of readers in mind.

C. Writing

Produce essays that make clear and continuous arguments, with appropriate assertions, transitions, and support;
Employ a well-developed vocabulary for analyzing writing;
Observe the conventions of academic writing;
Demonstrate the effective use of summary, paraphrase, and quotation without letting any of these elements submerge a writer's own controlling voice;
Avoid all forms of plagiarism;
Show an understanding of the ethical and rhetorical issues of plagiarism;
Demonstrate, through the careful use of textual evidence, the ability to support, refute, or modify another reader's claim about a reading;
Bring one text effectively to bear upon another, using the one to frame or illustrate or complicate the other;
Demonstrate the ability to subordinate narration and exposition to argument;
Develop a clear and comfortable academic voice;
Show the ability to offer editorial help to other writers;
Be able to conduct an analysis of a portfolio of one's own writing.

D. Grammar

Be able to use a handbook, grammar-check, and other resources in effectively editing writing;
Develop a useful, working vocabulary for speaking about grammatical issues;
Review one's own writing in relation to grammatical issues;
Effectively employ a full range of verb structures, including progressive and perfect tenses, auxiliaries, infinitives, participles, and irregular verb forms;
Show control of subject/verb agreement;
Show control of pronoun reference and of possessive forms;
Effectively manage compound and complex sentence structures, including parallelism and subordination;
Demonstrate a systematic understanding of punctuation, including commas, semicolons, and colons;
Show a solid sense of sentence boundaries, being able to avoid run-on sentences, comma splices, and fragments;
Show an understanding of the grammatical conventions of quotation, including quotations

embedded in one's own sentences;
Demonstrate an awareness of how to handle citations within a text;
Show an ability to transform passive voice to active voice and, where appropriate, active to passive;
Gradually learn to employ a wider vocabulary in the service of precision and persuasiveness.

E. Research

Write essays that analyze a primary source while drawing upon one or more secondary sources;
Demonstrate the use of effective paraphrase, summary, and quotation in the use of outside sources;
Draw upon the Rutgers Library system in producing at least one piece of writing for the course;
Learn to use a handbook as a tool for research questions;
Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate Internet sources;
Distinguish between the uncritical downloading of information and the evaluation of the usefulness and limitations of that information;
Show a reader's awareness of how a writer has used the research of others and of where such research seems lacking;
Show an awareness of the variations among documentation styles of various academic disciplines.

ENGLISH COMPOSITION 102: INTERPRETATION, SYNTHESIS, AND RESEARCH

Course Description

This course calls for extensive analytical writing based on literary texts, including drama, poetry, and especially fiction. Students are expected to continue gaining confidence as independent and critical thinkers, sustaining and further developing the competencies stressed in English 101. Students are also asked to produce writing that draws effectively upon research.

Course Goals

In English Composition 102 students will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies.

A. Critical Thinking

Demonstrate the critical thinking skills called upon in English 101;
Propose and effectively sustain a unified argument;
Recognize ineffective arguments, including arguments that oversimplify readings;
Evaluate conflicting interpretations of a reading;
Demonstrate the effective use of textual evidence in support of claims;
Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments of peers;
Address the implications of particular word choices and of word choices used systematically;
Offer independently developed analytical arguments about a reading;
Raise questions about a text, and distinguish the questions that may lead to fuller exploration of that text;
Evaluate the usefulness of secondary sources;
Learn to make the historical biographical context of a reading bear upon, without over-determining, the interpretation of that reading;
Synthesize a number of secondary sources in support of an argument.

B. Reading

Demonstrate the reading competencies called upon in English 101;
Read thematically, not so much extracting the theme from a reading as being able to work systematically with a theme, while noticing the analytical implications of highlighting one theme over others;
Show stylistic awareness of a writer's word choices, sentence structures, and tone of voice;
Read multiple texts in relation to one another, alert to opportunities for comparison and synthesis, looking for ways how one text may frame, illustrate, or complicate another;
Conduct research as critical readers—skimming, evaluating, discarding, selecting—so as to focus on a relatively few sources appropriate to a particular research project;
Learn to evaluate Internet resources receptively but skeptically, alert to issues of responsibility, authority, and documentation;
Demonstrate effective reading as an editor of one's own writing and the writing of peers;
Show an ability to re-read one's own writing with attention to the interaction of a primary

text, scholarly voice, and the writer's own controlling voice.

C. Writing

Demonstrate the writing competencies called upon in English 101;
Recognize and avoid plagiarism;
Distinguish interpretation and analysis from summary;
Develop sustained and unified interpretations of single readings;
Write interpretive essays that work with more than one text;
Effectively support claims with textual evidence;
Show awareness that interpretations of a reading need to take into account the reading as a whole;
Draw upon secondary sources in service of a central argument;
Appropriately employ summary, paraphrase, quotation, and citation;
Show an awareness of multiple interpretations and the possibilities of negotiating among them;
Revise essays stylistically.

D. Grammar

Demonstrate the grammatical competencies called upon in English 101;
Use and extend the vocabulary for speaking about grammatical issues;
Extend the repertoire of available sentence structures, making more deliberate use of structures like apposition and parallelism;
Demonstrate control of the grammar of quotations;
Recognize the rhetorical use of ungrammatical elements in readings;
Learn to think of grammar analytically stylistically, that is, in terms of understanding and marshalling the power of sentence structures rather than merely avoiding grammatical errors.

E. Research

Demonstrate the research competencies called upon in English 101;
Participate in a librarian's tour of the Rutgers Library system, and produce at least one piece of writing that draws upon Rutgers Library resources;
Learn how to avoid all forms of plagiarism;
Consider both the ethical and rhetorical dimensions of plagiarism;
Write essays that coordinate the analysis of a primary source with the synthesis of several secondary sources;
Show awareness of the ways in which readings have used and not used research;
Show an awareness of the relevance of historical and biographical research in the interpretation of literary texts;
Show an awareness of the variations in research formats among disciplines;
Learn to critically evaluate Internet resources.

TRANSFER COURSES: ENGLISH 121: EXPOSITORY WRITING I

Course Description and Goals

This course is required of transfer students who have taken one or more composition courses elsewhere but whose writing needs attention at the sentence-level. The course meets three times a week and has the same goals and exit criteria as English 101. But the course uses its small size and workshop format to offer the detailed grammatical attention needed for students to move forward in the writing sequence. Students read representative academic texts and write essays of moderate length, with opportunities for revision and close attention to editorial skills.

TRANSFER COURSES: ENGLISH 122: EXPOSITORY WRITING II

Course Description and Goals

This course is required of transfer students who have taken two composition courses elsewhere but whose writing shows a need for more work in critical reading and more attention to grammatical issues. Like English 101, the course focuses upon analytical writing about non-fiction; but like English 102, the course includes a research component. The course stresses revision and editing, and it stresses the analytical skills needed in writing about other writers' arguments. To complete English 122, students

must successfully pass a final exam by writing an analytical in response to a question about a substantial reading they receive in advance.

HONORS COMPOSITION: ENGLISH 103 and ENGLISH 104

English 103 and English 104 are writing courses offered by the Honors Program and open primarily to students who are enrolled in that program. English 103, like English 101, focuses upon the analysis of non-fiction texts. English 104, like English 102, focuses upon the interpretation of literary texts and calls for some library research. Where space is available, English 103 is also open to students who have scored 650 or higher on their Verbal SAT's. For information on the Honors Program, contact Dr. John Gunkel (X-5866).

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

After completing English Composition, students are required to take at least two further writing courses. These courses are to be chosen from an array of writing-intensive courses that are offered throughout the undergraduate program. Students must take at least one of these two writing-intensives within their major. These courses are usually designated as "section 66" or "section 67" in the Schedule of Classes. In addition to taking writing-intensives in their major, students should be alert to ways in which they can take a writing-intensive course that simultaneously satisfies one of their other requirements, such as the literature or interdisciplinary requirement. For more on the Writing Across the Curriculum program, go to wac.newark.rutgers.edu.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

As one of the most culturally diverse colleges in the United States, Rutgers-Newark takes pride in its linguistic diversity. Most Rutgers-Newark students are bilingual, and many have come to English as their second or even third language. Many students have been speaking and writing English for a long time; others are still fairly new to the language. In various ways, writing programs at Rutgers-Newark seek to take into account students' needs as learners of English.

The Program of American Language Studies (PALS) offers a variety of courses—in listening, speaking, reading, and writing—for students who have been in the United States a short time. PALS offers testing and appropriate placement for both graduate and undergraduate students. One of its courses, Grammar and Composition (21:049:10) may be required of students who are enrolling for an undergraduate degree. While the course is primarily for international students, students who have graduated from U.S. high schools may also find the Grammar and Composition course helpful preparation for the level of English expected in college writing classes. PALS is directed by Dr. Mary Moya (X-5013). For a fuller description of the PALS program and its offerings, see <http://eslrutgers.com>.

Students may also take some of their required writing courses with an ESL emphasis. There are sections of both Communication Skills 142 and of English 101 specifically designated for ESL students. These sections call for the same levels of performance as other sections, but they are smaller, and they offer instruction in grammatical and idiomatic issues that often come along with learning English as a second language. For transfer students, English 121 offers a similar kind of attention to sentence-level issues in a small class setting.

ESL students in writing classes must pass the same exit exams required of other students. However, since time limitations can be particularly frustrating for students who are not writing in their first language, ESL students are provided with more than the customary three hours to write their exams.

The single most important action for students working for competence in English is to persist in their writing courses. Even when these courses prove difficult to pass, the sustained contact with the reading and writing demands of these courses is what enables students to attain their college degrees. The University requires that undergraduates be enrolled in a writing course each semester until completion of their composition requirement. Ignoring or evading this requirement, even for a semester, can be a serious mistake. The best strategy for achieving written competence in English is to take advantage of the help offered within writing courses.

SUPPORT FOR WRITING COURSES

The Writing Center

Students are encouraged to seek peer tutoring in the Writing Center, Hill Hall 112, Phone (973) 353-1955. The Writing Center is directed by Patricia Bender [ADD]. Tutoring is primarily by appointment, but drop-in hours are also available. The Writing Center also offers workshops on writing issues for both undergraduates and graduate students. For this semester's tutorial hours, a schedule of Writing Center activities, and a fuller description of the Writing Center's services, go to www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~nwc.

English 100: Writing Workshop

English 100 is a workshop attached to some sections of English 101. Most students are enrolled in English 100 on the basis of their placement exam or on the recommendation of their instructors in a previous Communication Skills course. But students may also elect to enroll in English 100, where space permits. Each section of English 100 is attached to a corresponding section of English 101, so that, for example, students taking section 08 of English 100 are also enrolled in section 08 of English 101. Students receive 1.0 N credit for the workshop and a grade of either satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). Each English 100 workshop is taught by a member of the Writing Program faculty, but not by the teacher of the 101 course to which it is attached. This arrangement ensures that workshop students will have at least two expert sources of writing advice during the semester. The English 100 is designed to give students extra help on the issues central to English 101, including critical reading and exam-taking.

Exam Workshops

Exam workshops are offered to students who have had difficulty passing the final exam of a writing course. A student who have received a T-grade in a writing class on the basis of a failing exam is eligible to enroll in a weekly exam workshop. There is no cost and no credit attached to an exam workshop, and students enrolled in the workshop get at least two opportunities to retake the final exam. If, at the end of a semester of workshop work, students have not passed their exam, they must retake the course.

Students with T-grades but who are unable to schedule a workshop or who prefer to work one-on-one with a tutor may also maintain their eligibility to retake their final exam by making a weekly appointment at the Writing Center [See above].

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

English placement decisions are made by a committee of faculty experienced with the levels of writing performance expected of students in each writing course. Students are placed on the basis of the Verbal SAT score, their score on the "sentence sense" portion of the Rutgers Placement exam, and a sample essay. Students' language backgrounds are also taken into account. Based on the evidence available, students are placed into courses from which they have the most to benefit and in which they have the best chance to succeed. The courses into which students may be placed are listed below.

Communication Skills 142

For students needing stronger foundations in reading accurately, in managing essays effectively, and in handling sentences correctly. The course pays close attention to academic reading and offers intensive grammatical work.

Communication Skills 143

For students needing a stronger foundation in the conventions of academic writing. The course emphasizes critical reading skills and the ability to sustain clear and coherent arguments about non-fiction reading.

English 101

For students ready to write analytical arguments about academic readings. The course asks students to demonstrate a critical understanding of the strategies of other writers while effectively managing their own.

English 100 + 101

For students who seem ready for 101 but who may need support in one or more areas. The once-a-week writing workshop (English 100) offers help with critical reading, grammar review, and exam-writing strategies.

English 101 (ESL)

For students who are ready for English 101 but who need further help with some of the grammatical and idiomatic issues that come with writing English as a second language.

English 103

For students who have been admitted to the Honors Program. Students with Verbal SATs of 650 or above are also invited to take English 103 if space is available.

English 121

For transfer students who may have taken one or more composition courses elsewhere but whose writing shows serious difficulties in the management of sentences.

English 122

For transfer students who may have taken one or more composition courses elsewhere but whose writing shows difficulties in working critically with arguments.

FINAL EXAM PROCEDURES

Students in English 101, 102, 121, and 122 must pass a final exam in order to be able to pass their writing course. Students in Communication Skills 142 and 143 also must take a final exam and usually must pass that exam in order to move on to the next level of writing.

Writing exams are performance-based. In order to pass a course, students must demonstrate that they can perform competently in response to a specific essay question about a representative reading. In evaluating students' essays, teachers are looking for how well they have understood the reading, whether they can maintain effective control of their language choices (including grammar), and whether they have been able to respond directly to the question in an essay that offers a coherent and developed argument. Each final exam consists of a single student essay, and the essays are read holistically—that is, a reader evaluates an essay based on an overall impression. So, for example, an essay that offers a strong and detailed argument may succeed despite some grammar problems; whereas an essay that makes only a few errors but shows only a loose understanding of the reading and makes an insubstantial argument will not pass.

Each exam essay is read by two instructors other than a student's own teacher. In the case of a difference of opinion, a third reader may grade an exam. At a later stage in the evaluation process, teachers have a chance to review their students' exams and to argue the result of any grades with which they do not concur. So when an exam is judged to be failing, three readers have joined in that assessment.

Final exams are graded on a four-point scale. To pass, an essay must receive a grade of "3" or higher from two readers. What follows is a typical grading rubric used by teachers as they read final exams.

The categories below describe typical essays at four levels of performance. Readers should take into account that students are writing under time constraints. Nevertheless, a three-hour exam period, if well managed, gives students enough time to edit their writing effectively.

4. (PASS) The broadest category. A 4 essay is clearly competent but may range from competent to excellent. It shows an accurate understanding of the reading, and it responds clearly to the question asked. It establishes a clear point of view, preferably in the form of a thesis. It backs up generalizations with reasoning, examples, quotations, or other support. The essay is coherent, establishing clear transitional relationships among its parts. It has very few errors of grammar or diction to distract a reader. It has a fluid style, avoiding both ponderous, murky sentences and strings of choppy, simplistic ones. All in all, the writer shows thoughtful control of the essay.

3. (LOW PASS) A 3 essay is marginally competent. It may show a loose, approximate understanding of the reading, and it may respond somewhat indirectly (though not irrelevantly) to the question asked. It

establishes a point of view, though at times that point of view may waver. It backs up generalizations with at least some support. The essay is coherent, although at times the connections between parts could be more explicit. It may have a few distracting problems of grammar or diction. It has a competent, readable style (a reader doesn't have to back up). All in all, the writer shows adequate control of the essay.

2. (HIGH NO PASS) A 2 essay is approaching competence, but seriously flawed in at least one respect. It may not demonstrate an adequate understanding of the reading, or it may not effectively address the question asked. It may not establish a clear point of view or back up its generalizations with effective support. The essay may lack coherence, or if coherent from paragraph to paragraph, some of its paragraphs may lack coherence from sentence to sentence. It may have several distracting problems of grammar or diction. Stylistically, it may be too convoluted or vague to make ready sense, or it may be simplistic or repetitive. All in all, the writer shows incomplete control of the essay.

1. (NO PASS) A 1 essay is inadequate in some way or seriously flawed in more than one way. It may demonstrate an inadequate understanding of the reading or inadequately address the question asked. It may not establish a clear point of view or support its generalizations. The essay may lack coherence at either the paragraph or sentence level. It may have problems of mechanics and diction that interfere with a reader's understanding. It may lack a clear, effective style. All in all, the writer shows little control of the essay.

GRADES AND GRADING POLICIES

Final Grades. In the Rutgers system, there are no minus grades, so that in awarding final grades, teachers are restricted to the following: A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F, and W. In English 101, 102, 121, and 122, students must repeat the course if they have not received a grade of C or better.

T and R Grades. "T" means temporary and means that a student temporarily has been given the grade that the T accompanies (for example, "TD"), but that the student also has the opportunity to raise the grade. T-grades are sometimes given in the case of missing work. But the most typical use of the T-grade in writing courses is for students who do not pass the final exam. When a teacher gives a T-grade on the basis of a failing exam, that teacher is giving the student an opportunity to work on exam issues with a tutor or in a workshop during the following semester. If by the end of the following semester, a student has been unable to pass the exam, the "T" drops away, and the student must retake the course.

The "R" grade is limited to students who are being given a single, immediate opportunity to retake a writing exam. If the retake exam is not passing, the "R" drops away, and the student given the RD or RF grade now must retake the course.

The Meaning of Grades A Through F

The grade of "A" means "excellent." To get a grade of A in a writing course, a student must do consistently outstanding work. "A" essays show a strong and sophisticated sense of argument, offer well-detailed and persuasive interpretations of readings, and demonstrate a flexible, wide-ranging control of language. In writing courses, "A's" are not impossible to achieve, but they are very difficult.

The grade of "B" means "good." To get a grade of B in a writing course, students must consistently produce high quality work. "B" essays show a strong sense of argument, offer detailed and clear interpretations of readings, and demonstrate effective control of language. In writing courses, "B" is a superior grade, reflecting a high level of performance.

The grade of "C" means "competent." To get a grade of C represents solid accomplishment in a writing class and can be a level that is hard to achieve. "C" essays show a coherent sense of argument, offer clear understandings of readings, and demonstrate adequate control of language. In writing courses, "C" is an average grade, representing a solid level of performance.

The grade of "D" means "inadequate." A grade of D indicates that a writer needs to improve in one or more areas in order to satisfy the writing requirement. "D" essays show a shaky sense of argument, offer less than clear or accurate understanding of readings, and demonstrate incomplete control of language. A "D" grade represents a less than average performance. Students receiving a grade of D in a writing course need to retake it.

The grade of "F" means "failing." A grade of F means that a student has demonstrated little competency in writing. Failing essays offer little sense of argument, demonstrate little understanding of readings, and do not show sufficient control of language. The grade of "F" indicates a low level of performance. It may also indicate a lack of commitment to the course. Students receiving a grade of F need to repeat the

course.

Cumulative Grades and Final Grades

A final grade represents a teacher's overall assessment of a student's performance in a course. The final grade takes into account a large number of writing performances over the course of a semester, including both formal papers and in-class writing. Individual instructors determine the weighting of their various writing assignments and of class participation, and they describe their grading methods in the syllabi they distribute to students early in the semester. In determining their final grades, teachers take into account a student's performance on exams, including the final exam. Teachers reserve the right to assign the grades that best describe students' overall performances in their courses. Thus, sometimes teachers allow for improvement, counting students' performances at the end of the semester more highly than early papers, and sometimes teachers register disappointment, allowing students' weak essays late in the semester to outweigh promising starts.

Students in writing classes should have, at each stage of their courses, a clear sense of where they stand in terms of grades. Since almost all writing courses include a midterm exam, students should also know, by mid-semester or sooner, whether their exam grades correspond with their other writing grades. Low grades indicate that students should be seeking extra help, either directly from their teachers or in the form of workshops or peer tutoring.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

More than three absences jeopardize a student's standing in a writing class. Although teachers make an effort to accommodate students in emergency situations and with documented medical excuses, it is usually not possible to make up for missing work that occurs in class. When students miss a significant amount of the in-class work that is vital to their course, the best strategy is to withdraw from the course with a W. Where necessary, the Writing Program can assist students in the withdrawal process.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others' work. Plagiarism ranges from misunderstandings about the handling of sources and citations to outright theft. Plagiarism draws a range of penalties, too, all of them severe. They range from the failing of an assignment to the failing of a course to expulsion from the University. When writing teachers encounter plagiarism, they deal with it always by failing the given piece of writing, usually by also failing the student in the course, and often by turning the matter over to the Dean's Office for further disciplinary action.

Most writing courses devote a portion of class-time to the demands that go along with paraphrasing, summarizing, quotation, and acknowledgement. In addition, the handbook assigned in each writing class contains thorough discussions of the writing issues surrounding plagiarism.

Plagiarism is ethically wrong in any college class; in a college writing class, plagiarism is also rhetorically naïve. Teachers who have grown familiar with students' individual writing patterns easily recognize departures from these patterns. By contrast, teachers respect students' sincere efforts in working with difficult reading—including efforts to make properly cited use of outside reading—and are generous in their assistance. The advice is simple: don't plagiarize and do ask for help in using and citing outside sources.

For the University's policy on plagiarism, consult the Rutgers Student Handbook.

PORTFOLIOS

A portfolio is a collection of one's work. In writing classes, students are usually asked to collect in a single folder their major papers, exam essays, and other writing, sometimes including drafts and journal entries. At appropriate points in the semester, a student and his or her teacher can review the portfolio, looking to make generalizations about the work and looking at how the work has developed over time. Sometimes portfolios are useful in assessing (and grading) the semester's work as a whole. Carried beyond the semester, portfolios have the potential of helping students to gauge and to document the range and depth of their writing experience in college. In some courses, students are asked to keep a portfolio and to include a cover letter reflecting on the weaknesses and, more importantly, the strengths of the writing. In some courses, the portfolios are selective rather than comprehensive, representing a student's assessment of the best work of the semester.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Any complaints about writing courses are to be referred to Dr. Jonathan Hall, Interim Director of the

Writing Program, at JONHALL1@ANDROMEDA.RUTGERS.EDU. All complaints will be handled confidentially. Any matters remaining unresolved may be referred to Dr. Virginia Tiger, Chair of the English Department, 502 Hill Hall.

The Director also handles grade protests. To protest a course grade, a student must submit a written explanation of why he or she thinks the grade inaccurate, along with all graded copies of the work submitted for the course. Writing teachers remain the grading authorities for their classes, so the burden of proof demonstrating an unfair grade lies with the student. Grades are rarely overturned. Nevertheless, grade protests are taken seriously, and portfolios submitted are thoughtfully reviewed.

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