

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING II —

INTEGRATING WRITING WITH CONTENT COURSES:

The Writing II Program incorporates writing into courses across the curriculum to help advance student learning and course objectives. As an integral part of a Writing II course, writing is a means to help students:

- to deepen their understanding of the course content
- to develop the ability to think, using a given disciplinary perspective
- to master and apply these disciplinary modes of thought in the course and to other contexts and contents
- to develop their written communication skills.

WRITING II COURSE PHILOSOPHY:

- Critical thinking and writing develop together, each supporting the other. Clarifying writing helps clarify thinking, as well as the reverse.
- Writing is not external to thought nor is it merely transcribing already clearly conceived ideas. Rather, writing is a means of better understanding how we think and how to deepen our thinking.
- Within an academic context, we write to communicate, drawing on the conventions of a given field.
- Writing in these courses is not an add-on or a means of assessment. Writing helps students meaningfully engage with and apply course content. The most memorable writing assignments allow students to combine their own interests with the questions and ideas posed in the course.
- Students develop as writers and thinkers by completing and receiving feedback in an iterative process of drafting and redrafting their prose.
- Writing instruction is most effective when taking students through a series of carefully sequenced informal ungraded assignments (e.g., blog posts, personal stories, visual representations of thought, etc.) that lead to write longer, graded writing projects. Ungraded assignments allow students to practice the kind of thinking required in the graded assignments and also help them connect more deeply with course ideas. Longer assignments help them craft an academic argument informed by a disciplinary perspective.

WHY TEACH WRITING II COURSES:

Depending on a student's major, the Writing II course may be a student's **only** writing-intensive experience at UCLA. These courses also allow instructors to do take concrete steps to address the gap that many UCLA faculty observe (and often complain about) in their students' writing skills. Writing instructors should consider creating courses that:

- Provide students the chance to practice improving their writing while working on assignments that they care about and challenge them intellectually
- Are centered around active learning opportunities that can spark students' interest in the subject matter.
- Teach students how to think about writing, how to approach a writing task and how to use writing for a meaningful communicative purpose.
- Give the instructor an opportunity to discuss the audience expectations and disciplinary perspectives

- in their fields, including writing style, citations, voice, and abstracts.
- Allow instructors to facilitate how students develop intellectual, meaningful, critical, and creative engagements with their chosen projects.

COURSE WRITING REQUIREMENTS: The total page count of each writing project is less important than the total pages written across the entire course. But the Writing II committee recommends that students write a total of fifteen to twenty pages (approximately 3,750 to 5,000 words), including drafts.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES:

We encourage each instructor to bring their own pedagogical style and strategies to structuring the course. Structures of each course may vary, but we recommend that instructors:

- Begin by identifying the learning outcomes, including course goals focused on writing. Some skills will be basic to all fields, such as differentiating opinion from evidence-based claims. Other skills are field-specific such as what counts as evidence and how to provide context to make the evidence resonate meaningfully with a particular audience.
- Work backwards from the learning outcomes to designing sequenced assignments that lead towards these outcomes.
- Structure their course around the writing assignments, rather than around the readings and lectures. (See [Course Planner](#) for examples)
- Ensure that classes, especially discussion sections, are interactive and involve students in active learning (not lecturing about how to write, but asking students to write and reflect on the content and writing process).
- Model for students your own thought processes as you write and approach analysis of discipline-specific content. When instructors are explicit about their own thought process, they provide an excellent example of how experts in a given discipline think and write. For example, you might model for students the following questions:
 - What are the key questions driving the course?
 - What counts as a good question?
 - What counts as evidence or data?
 - What separates observations from inferences or interpretation?
 - How are inferences drawn from data or observations?
 - What paradigms of thought are privileged in the discipline? How might this differ from the paradigms that students bring to class?
 - How does audience determine how material is presented?
 - How is data contextualized within the conventions of a particular discipline and audience?
 - How does the course material incorporate and respond to the on-going conversations and polemics in the field?
- Use the course readings for more than content. Instead, use them as rhetorical models for structuring an argument, asking questions, analyzing evidence, and citing sources.

ASSUMPTIONS OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:

Students enrolled in most Writing II courses are usually not majors in the given field. In addition, most Writing II courses are lower-division and, thus, introductory. This means that:

- Readings, writing assignments and lectures should be geared toward students who are new to the discipline.
- Students will probably not have specialized background knowledge or proficiency in writing/thinking in the field.
- While students will have foundational academic writing skills learned in Writing I (English Composition 3) courses, they may find it challenging to apply these skills in the unfamiliar context of a new discipline or writing context.
- Course instruction and activities will need to ground students in disciplinary genres and writing conventions, including ways of presenting information, stylistic expectations, etc.

EVALUATING STUDENT WRITING:

What to Focus On -- When evaluating student writing, focus mainly on higher order concerns, considering the following questions:

- Does the writer respond to the prompt?
- Does the writer grasp core concepts?
- Does the piece of writing develop and support a thesis?
- Is the paper logically structured and organized clearly?
- What issues impede understanding?

While style, tone, and grammar are also important, they are not the primary focus. These issues should be attended to judiciously, either early in the drafting process if there is a pattern of error that impedes clarity, or at the end of the process when students are polishing their work.

Using Rubrics -- In Writing II courses and any accompanying TA sections, student performance, including performance on writing assignments, should be assessed on a criterion basis (not on a curve), using rubrics which measure the writing objectives outlined in the course. Here are some guidelines for development and use of rubrics:

- To ensure transparency, share rubrics with students, either in the syllabus or when the assignment is given
- Because students come from varied educational backgrounds, ensure that students who do not come from privileged writing backgrounds can produce satisfactory, good or excellent writing. Teach inclusively by scaffolding student learning and writing processes. (Be cautious of expectations that all college students should have a certain writing or research skillset perfected before taking your class.)
- Instructors should communicate early with their TAs regarding an evaluation process that brings both basic and accomplished writers respectively to more advanced levels of writing.
- Consider an evaluation system that rewards not only grammatical sentence construction (the product), but improvement from previous assignments (the process). Doing both will help good writers become better writers at the same time as teaching more novice writers who may have difficulty with language and grammar.

Responding Thoroughly, but Efficiently -- Evaluating work brings time management challenges to both professors and TAs. Here are some suggestions:

- Foster student peer-editing activities, where students read and comment on their classmates' work based on guidelines. (See [Course Planner](#) for suggested guidelines).
- Limit written comments to only one part of any given assignment, such as use of evidence, or development of a thesis.
- Adopt the scoring of peer reviewed journals: Accept, Revise/Re-submit, or Reject.

OTHER SPECIFICS:

- **TA and FACULTY TRAINING** – All TAs for the Writing II Program classes will take the appropriate writing pedagogy 495 courses to train them in writing pedagogy, including how to teach writing and give meaningful, constructive feedback. Teaching Fellows who teach independent seminars through the Cluster or History 96W are required to take a 495 course during which they develop their writing-centered syllabus and assignments in advance of the quarter in which they are slated to teach. In addition, workshops will be available for faculty of the Writing II Program to share insights about how best to integrate writing with course content. (See [Course Planner](#) for instructional resources.)
- **COURSE FORMATS:** Writing II courses should be offered in a variety of formats, from lecture classes with multiple sections to smaller stand-alone courses. Courses qualifying for Writing II credit include small writing courses, writing-intensive Honors Collegium seminars, Cluster courses, lecture courses that emphasize writing, and other lecture courses created or modified to emphasize the development of student writing.
- **COLLEGIUM OF UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS (CUTF):** The Writing II committee recognizes that graduate students may seek experience teaching writing courses. While CUTF courses are eligible for Writing II credit approval, please note two matters of timing. First, the Writing II approval process can take upwards of two to three quarters and is not guaranteed. Second, instructors of Writing II courses must complete English Composition 495E (or English Composition 495M and N in the Clusters training program) prior to teaching the approved course, and then enroll in English Composition 495F simultaneously with the approved course.
- **WRITING GENRES:** The Writing II Program acknowledges a wide variety of writing genres beyond a standard research paper, such as book review, literary analysis, op-ed letter to the editor, case study, field report, lab report, literature review, ethnography, scientific research paper, and policy brief. (See [Course Planner](#) for more options.) Instructors are free to select those genres most important for their given fields.
- **WRITING SECTION SIZES:** No more than twenty students should be in any given TA section. The only exception is in Cluster courses, where each GSI will normally be responsible for two sections of no more than twenty (20) students each.
- **COURSE STATUS:** Writing II courses must be offered for a letter grade and carry

impacted course status. Students will be dropped from their sections if they miss the first two course meetings.

- **SUMMER SESSIONS:** Summer Session Writing II courses must be taught by instructors who have had previous experience teaching in the Writing II Program or by TAs who have taken the appropriate writing pedagogy 495 training courses and have had previous experience teaching in a Writing II course.

- **UNITS:** Writing II courses must be 5-unit course.