

## Writing in W-Courses

### Learning Goals

The W-Course, taken in the sophomore year, is the second stage in a student's writing experiences at DePauw. Proficient writing skills cannot be learned once in a single writing class but must be practiced over time, for many different audiences, in different situations, and in different genres. Because writing conventions vary from discipline to discipline, students should understand the importance of continuing to investigate how to write in new disciplines after their W-Course.

By the end of the W-course students should have continued to improve their understanding of:

- the uses of writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating;
- flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading;
- how readers perceive and respond to different forms of writing;
- writing assignments as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing, and acknowledging appropriate primary and secondary sources;
- collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.

### Course Guidelines

1. Instructors should encourage students to understand that *writing is a process and a tool for thinking that can help them learn* by requiring suitable kinds of preparatory and informal writing. The WPCC recommends scaffolding assignments—building in staged revision—for at least three of the formal writing assignments.
2. W-Courses should require 4-6 formal writing assignments of varying lengths, totaling 16-20 pages of polished, academic prose. Assignments should form a coherent sequence that enables students to build upon the writing skills they are learning and that breaks down large assignments into smaller steps.
3. Faculty should provide timely feedback on student writing. In addition to written commentary on drafts, feedback may also come through individual conferences, in-class group work, peer commentary, reading responses, journals, etc. There is no point at which students are “too good” or already “too competent” to benefit from discussions of language and writing.
4. In choosing texts and other assignments for the course, consider the relationship between your course goals and your goals for student writing. Readings might provide students with models of good writing in your discipline. By approaching the course topic through writing, instructors help students to understand the relevance of writing to thinking in all disciplines.
5. Students should meet with the instructor for at least two conferences. Such conferences are essential to the teaching of writing. They also help draw students into intellectual life at DePauw University.
6. Students should be introduced to writing in relation to sources, using proper methods of paraphrase, and issues related to academic integrity including plagiarism. Building upon their experiences writing in relation to sources in their first-year seminar, students may be taught to develop strategies for conducting research, of locating appropriate sources, and writing in relation to those sources. Faculty might wish to consider using a text like *The Craft of Research* by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams to guide students through the research process. Faculty might also wish to continue using books from the First-Year Seminar, including *They Say, I Say*, *Style*, and *A Pocket Style Manual*.

### Assessment and Outcomes

The following assessment and outcome guidelines seek to ensure that students gain writing skills that are transferable to other courses and writing situations.

Students should be evaluated on their ability to:

- write with fluency, demonstrating control of such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation and spelling;

- write and revise in ways that go beyond corrections to spelling and grammar by addressing higher order structural, argumentative, and stylistic elements;
- write appropriately for different writing tasks, demonstrating an ability to control the focus of papers and paragraphs;
- use appropriate documentation;
- respond to the needs of different audiences by adopting an appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality.