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Curriculum Structure

English 24: Composition II

Department of English

Kingsborough Community College

CUNY

**Course Description**

English 24 is a reading, writing, and research course focused on the various ways knowledge is produced and articulated within the academy.  Through multidisciplinary inquiry, students in English 24 engage in several research projects, each of which requires them to deepen their knowledge of different modes of research and information literacy. With this multidisciplinary emphasis, it differs from more traditional approaches to composition II courses, which focus primarily on teaching students how to research and write about literature. The ultimate goal of English 24 is to teach students to integrate scholarly and multidisciplinary reading, writing, and thinking into their own research so that they can write more skillfully and critically about the various subject matters that impact their lives.

**Targeted Learning Outcomes**

**Writing**

Students engage in several different research projects that culminate in written texts. They become familiar with different modes of academic research and different types of evidence and analysis through these different research projects. Via exposure to different disciplines and perspectives, students will cultivate greater open-mindedness towards viewpoints other than their own.

* Use informal writing like prewriting, freewriting, brainstorming, journals, notes, lists, concept maps and outlines to help generate ideas.
* Use quotation, paraphrase, and summary by way of analyzing others’ ideas and developing/elucidating one’s own ideas; incorporate quotation, paraphrase, and summary smoothly, accurately and appropriately.
* Frame one’s view in light of other perspectives and positions, including those of peers in the course.
* Utilize feedback from instructor and peer reviewers; engage in active, significant revision of earlier drafts of research projects.
* Communicate clearly, correctly, fluently, and effectively, according to appropriate language conventions.
* Become familiar with formal documentation styles (MLA and APA) and why they are used.

**Reading**

Students read extensively and critically across genres and disciplines to expand their range of proficiency and awareness. Through reading, students gather information, encounter others’ arguments, discover what they don’t yet know, and begin to frame their own perspective. This type of reading requires students to maintain focus and attention.

* Become familiar with genres typical of different disciplines and approaches to reading them.
* Distinguish between primary and secondary sources and their uses in research writing.
* Critique arguments encountered in readings: uncover key assumptions, find logical inconsistencies, examine evidence, and analyze conclusions.

**Information Literacy**

Students become more skillful in finding appropriate texts, data, and information needed for the specific projects they are researching. Strong Information literacy skills require the patience to find, evaluate, and document sources.

* Access information helpful for a given research agenda, drawing on both library and internet sources. Increase fluency in selecting databases and using search terms in CUNY library holdings, both print and electronic.
* Evaluate sources for reliability, relevance, and bias.
* Document research sources fully and accurately, using academic conventions; avoid unintentional plagiarism; produce a Works Cited page and/or References list according to a formal documentation style (MLA or APA)

**Required Texts**

This 24 curriculum, asks instructors to select a number of texts from different academic disciplines. This allows for flexibility in the combination of course readings and recognizes that each instructor has his/her own particular teaching/research interests, familiarity with different topics, and sense of texts that may work well with them. In addition, this multidisciplinary approach allows for flexibility in the types of texts that are taught, which may include not only books and chapters from books but also scholarly articles, news articles, historical documents, scientific studies, documentaries, films, speeches, interviews, songs, TV shows, etc. As you plan your course, please do keep in mind that the English department intends Eng 24 to be a *reading* course as much as it is a *writing* course. To this end, please ensure that your students are doing an appropriate amount of challenging reading and that you structure classroom time focused on helping them learn to develop reading habits, skills, and knowledge that will serve them throughout the curriculum.

**How to Use this Curriculum**

We've structured this approach to teaching English 24 around three major multidisciplinary writing/research assignments. The writing assignments here are designed to spiral toward greater and greater student autonomy with regard to research. Therefore, the first stage of assignment one calls for a close reading of a difficult text with no requirement for additional research or reading while the second stage of the assignment asks students to research one related reading; the second assignment asks students to find several sources to make sense of an issue or topic; and the final project may require students to research entirely independently, to discover adequate source material to develop a thesis-driven essay. Within each of these assignments, we suggest pre-writing, research, and information literacy activities that help students begin to do the types of thinking, analysis, and writing that best prepare them for each assignment.

The curriculum is divided into three units, each culminating in one of the three major writing assignments. While creating your course, please do remember to leave sufficient time for students to research and to read the texts that they find on their own.

We include here a description of the formal essay that students should be working on during each unit as well as a list of suggested "scaffolding" (i.e., low-stakes, informal writing assignments) that will help students "warm up" for each assignment. You are not required or expected to use every suggestion for scaffolding; we offer these ideas and suggestions to help give you a sense of how many of us might approach a particular formal writing assignment in our classrooms.

You will need to create a syllabus and "course calendar" for your own class, following the general requirements and structure of this model curriculum. Please also use the “syllabus template” document as a guide as you create your own syllabus. For each formal writing assignment, you should provide students with clear written instructions, detailing the requirements of the assignment, due date(s), and, possibly, criteria by which you will judge their essays (see "assessment," below).

Please notice that this curriculum does not lay out a "day-by-day" approach. We know that you are already a strong and experienced teacher‒that's why you’re here! We want you to shape your day-to-day class sessions with the overall goals of the unit in mind based on your own knowledge of what works well in Composition classrooms. However, if you find yourself uncertain as to how to approach a specific concept, writing skill, or assignment in the classroom, please do not hesitate to ask the program directors for advice.

**Course Outline**

**Unit One**

Approximately weeks 1-3

**Formal essay #1: The Exploratory Essay**

In this assignment, students are asked to grapple with a challenging text selected by the instructor. The text chosen for this assignment could be challenging in a variety of different ways, all of which are appropriate for this assignment. A text could be challenging because it: 1) Presents a point of view on an issue that might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable to the student; 2) Presumes a body of prior knowledge that the student does not have; 3) Is written in a style that is unfamiliar to the student (i.e., a scholarly article); 4) Contains textual characteristics that complicate reading.

Rather than a superficial reading and facile conclusion, this assignment asks students to investigate what makes the text complex. Students will do two stages of this essay: 1) Write self-reflectively about their intellectual process as they read the text. Engage particular questions or problems that arise for them as they read the text. 2) Further explore the question or problem they discovered during stage 1 by finding relevant sources that contextualize their original reading.

**Suggested scaffolding:**

* Identifying and sharing references and vocabulary for further research.
* Reading annotations | Students annotate the challenging text as they read and re-read to create material evidence of their thoughts and reactions during their process of reading.
* Supported reactions | Informal writing that offers personal reactions to the text and draws on textual evidence including citation, paraphrasing, and summarizing.
* Targeted summary and/or analysis | Instead of asking students to summarize or analyze an entire reading, instructors ask students to summarize an author's discussion of a particular issue or topic.
* Gathering context clues | Students are asked to analyze a text by determining what pieces of information are missing from it.
* Re-introduction to MLA citation style | Students work in groups to teach each other the essentials of MLA style. Concrete examples can be created using texts students have read in class (during an in-class activity).

**Suggested information literacy activities:**

* We highly recommend that you schedule an initial information literacy session with a librarian in which students learn the following background information: using reference books (i.e., subject encyclopedias, handbooks); finding sources; identifying search terms; evaluating sources.
* Schedule a follow-up session on identifying and using databases to find texts (articles, essays, book chapters): students need instruction orienting them to the various databases that might be helpful for the topic of this assignment. Suggested databases for this assignment are Academic Search Premier (which contains scholarly and popular articles on a variety of topics) and Lexis Nexis (which contains newspaper articles), and topic-specific databases chosen according to theme. This session should be designed for the needs of this particular assignment rather than being a "general" library orientation. This session could be taught or co-taught by a librarian and the instructor in a library classroom or a computer lab.

**Unit Two**

Approximately weeks 4-6/7

**Formal essay #2: Connecting Conversations**

In this assignment, students are asked to discern the connections (the "conversation") that exist among three manageable texts from three separate disciplines. The metaphor of the conversation implies that all three texts engage the same issue or topic, albeit from different perspectives. The type of thesis students construct within the bounds of this assignment will vary depending on the nature of the "conversation" taking place between the texts. The instructor may select one or two of the texts for this assignment, but the assignment must involve the student finding-via research-at least one of the texts to include in the conversation. The student should use resources accessible via the Kibbee Library.

**Suggested scaffolding:**

* Observing disciplinary conventions | Students do close readings of the texts, noting distinctions in writing styles and structures, technical vocabulary, and types of evidence used in the various disciplines involved in the "conversation."
* Concept mapping | Students create a map of the relationships they find between readings they will use for their paper.
* Connecting quotations | Students write paragraphs that explore and connect quotations from three different texts.
* Dramatic dialogue | Students create an imagined dialogue that might take place between two or three of the authors they will use for their paper.
* Role playing | Students portray the perspectives of various authors in conversation with one another (in-class activity).

**Suggested information literacy activities**

* We suggest activities similar to #2 in unit 1. Have students re-visit subject-specific databases and explore databases that are tailored toward certain types of scholarship. These sessions are best held in a computer classroom with a librarian present.

**Unit Three**

Approximately weeks 7/8-12

**Formal essay #3: Investigating Further with *Primary Sources***

For the final assignment, students will construct a question or hypothesis inspired by the course theme to investigate further, test, or answer using primary sources. This assignment could proceed in one of two ways:

1. The class could take a purely text-based approach and use texts as primary sources (lived experience, material culture, literary works, works of art, films, YouTube clips, memoirs...), in conjunction with one or more secondary texts (critical or scholarly discussions, research done by other scholars, etc). The topic might address cultural attitudes on a particular issue relevant to the other texts or themes addressed in the course. In the paper, students should support their argument with references drawn from several primary texts.

2. The class could take a more empirical approach and use empirical research (surveys, interviews, participant observation notes, field research) to investigate, test, or answer questions or hypotheses. This project should involve some secondary research to help students establish a small review of relevant literature (some of which may be drawn from course readings and/or texts they have collected for previous assignments). Instructors should help students develop their research questions, develop their research method, and develop a paper that draws meaningfully on the data they have gathered.

**Suggested scaffolding for a text-only project:**

* Collecting data | Students should collect examples of primary texts relevant to their topic (watching the TV episodes, reading poems, finding advertisements...) before narrowing their focus and constructing an argument.
* Observing and collecting specific details | In low-stakes, open-ended writing assignments, or in small groups, students create "thick descriptions" of their findings.
* Documentation | With many non-print sources, this can be a genuine challenge. Tiny details of format don't need to be perfect, but class exercises should focus on the big issues of clear accurate attribution, and intellectual and commercial property issues.
* Metacognitive writing on how the particular projects the students have done over the course of the semester reflect disciplinary boundaries.

**Suggested scaffolding for an empirical project:**

* Creating a research question and proposal | Early in the process, students write up their research question and create a proposal that describes and justifies the research process they intend to undertake.
* Storing and analyzing the data | Faculty should help students create systematic ways of collecting and keeping track of their data (i.e., transcribing interviews, keeping careful records of field notes, compiling survey responses…) and ways of analyzing that data to construct meaning.
* Review of literature | Early or mid-way through this unit, students do a small amount of secondary research related to the topic they are researching. This secondary research should refine and extend their understanding of the issue. In this review, students would simply provide terse summaries of the relevant literature they have found.
* Annotated bibliography | Mid-way through the unit, students might create an annotated bibliography in which they articulate the connections they see between secondary research and their own empirical project.
* Metacognitive writing on how the particular projects the students have done over the course of the semester reflect disciplinary boundaries.

**Suggested Information Literacy Activities**

* Assisted computer lab work | Students work in a computer lab in class on their research, if needed. The instructor, and possibly a librarian, should be present to provide guidance and support for this process.
* Evaluating online sources | Because students might draw on primary sources from the internet, the issue of evaluating these sources should be addressed in this unit.
* APA style | Because writing in the social sciences typically uses APA citation style, students should learn the basics of this style if the class is taking the empirical research approach (option 2) to this assignment.