

Info and Guidelines for English 24 Civic Engagement Course

Kingsborough has established criteria for all courses that fulfill the Civic Engagement (CE) graduation requirement, which emphasize the qualities of “social awareness, acceptance of social responsibility and active participation in meeting the challenges of a modern society.” The college has established three analytical “domains” for the exploration of civic engagement: political knowledge, civic knowledge, and social responsibility.

The domain we have chosen for ENG 24 Civic Engagement certified courses is “social responsibility” because this domain does not rely on particular content knowledge and is open to many different possible themes and approaches that English Department faculty are adept at using. However, while many ENG 24 courses already take on complex social issues, they may not fulfill the requirements of a CE course outlined in this document.

Faculty teaching a CE designated English 24 must do the following:

- 1. Include an explanation of the CE credit on their syllabus and include the “social responsibility” outcome listed in the “learning outcomes” section. (See sample syllabus in this document.)**
- 2. Establish their class orientation toward social responsibility in at least the third unit of their course, which includes the major writing/research assignment.**
- 3. Require students to write a short reflective essay in which they assess their class experience. (Instructors are not required to read or grade this essay).**

We stress that the decision to teach a particular section of ENG 24 as CE is entirely in the hands of the faculty member offering the course. Each instructor can choose whether or not they wish to have their ENG 24 course designated as CE. Even if a course has been designated as a CE course on CUNYFirst previously, an instructor may or may not opt to offer the CE course that semester.

What makes a CE ENG 24 different from other ENG 24 sections?

We think that the “framing” matters. In an Eng 24 CE course, the inquiry moves from the individual to the individual's relationship with community, broadly construed. A CE ENG 24 isn't about having the “right” answers, correct intellectual content, or driving students toward a certain predefined way of viewing the world. It is about developing a framework that views students as thoughtful citizens and active participants in the world, and that provides them with an analytical lens (or multiple lenses) through which to understand situations they encounter in their lives and consider their social responsibility to confront, challenge, or change those situations.

How does a CE ENG 24 accomplish this?

Students will critically examine their relationship to the power structures that influence their own lives and the larger society. While student observations and experiences may serve as a starting point for critical analysis of a social issue under inquiry, ENG 24 is a research writing course, so students engage in a process of inquiry that helps them construct a broader and deeper understanding of the world they inhabit. The research requirement of ENG 24 remains as a way to contextualize students' experiences and observations. A CE ENG 24 will bring in differing opinions and ideas, including an analysis of where those ideas come from, and whose interests they serve.

Regardless of topic, faculty will engage students in critical literacy practices that enable them to:

- Identify their own social spaces and communities as sites of inquiry and investigation.
- Put texts in conversation with what is learned from the empirical and experiential, as a way of broadening their understanding of the forces that shape power relations in our society.
- Operationalize what they've learned through their inquiry to imagine ethical responses to injustice and inequity in society.

Does a CE Eng 24 require “outside the classroom” volunteer activity, empirical study or field work?

A CE ENG 24 may or may not include experiential learning activities; however, instructors are encouraged to consider experimenting with ways of ‘expanding the classroom.’ (Please see the “unit design” section of this document for more ideas on how to do this, and please review the Eng 24 curriculum for a clear sense of the structure of unit 3 the course.)

English 24 CE Course Third Unit Design

Before redesigning their curriculum for unit 3, a faculty member should review how the current Eng 24 curriculum structure describes that portion of the course. For clarity, here is the description of unit 3 from the Pathways-approved curriculum for Eng 24:

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.

As is evident from this description, students in any English 24, regardless of CE designation, will construct a question or hypothesis inspired by the course theme to investigate further, test, or answer using primary sources. CE English 24 courses, however, take the cross-disciplinary nature of English 24 in a direction that orients students towards a critical construction of meaning with an eye towards a greater understanding of issues being researched. Students in such a course will ideally move beyond investigations that are primarily informative toward projects that argue for a socially just way of behaving, responding to, or otherwise ameliorating a social problem or inequity.

Given that English 24 is first and foremost a college composition course, unit 3 is focused on the development of a major writing assignment. **In CE sections, that major assignment should have the following qualities:**

1. It must be fundamentally text-based. As with all English 24 writing assignments, this writing assignment draws on the student's reading. This writing assignment involves incorporating primary sources with secondary sources in order to clarify the student's own perspective on an issue and make it deeper, more specific, and more knowledgeable. Students' reading should introduce them to a variety of views, giving them a larger perspective beyond what's right in front of them.

2. It must involve some type of primary research, but may or may not involve an experiential or empirical component. If there is no outside-the-classroom, out-in-the-world component, the Civic Engagement element of a writing assignment may be more difficult to see, but can still shape the assignment. Primary sources such as newspaper articles, first-hand accounts, government documents, manifestos or literary texts can bring to life some of the societal issues and themes. In these cases, assignments may be framed around questions like the following:

- "Why should we care if ...?"
- "What are the social justice issues or implications with respect to ...?"
- "Why is it societally important or valuable that ...?"
- "What is my/our social responsibility given that ...?"
- "Whose interests are being served by ...?"
- "What solution or solutions could be brought to this issue ...?" (this allows the students to get involved even if only in theory)
- "What are the most effective approaches to confronting/dealing with this social issue...?"

These non-empirical approaches can focus on societal impacts or societal causes that give rise to certain phenomenon or societal roles and connections.

3. It must be scaffolded. Early in the semester the instructor must establish the class orientation toward social justice, social responsibility, and power relations. The instructor will model key values and practices: knowledge as a community resource, respect for differences of opinion, value of each class member as a contributor, tolerance for diversity of opinions and uncertainty, existence and importance of facts--not only interpretations or opinions. Further, the instructor will make explicit these practices as elements of a democratic classroom and society. Major writing assignments will emerge from this in-class work, as well as various informal writing tasks and activities. Smaller writing pieces may take the form of freewriting, outline-making, field notes, interviews, and short reading responses, and can serve as parts of essay drafts. Instructors should consider the classroom moments when they can tip the discussion to issues of justice and equity. Such questions need to be incorporated into in-class writings, mini-writings, and oral syntheses of class discussions.

4. Critical thinking should always be front and center. Whether there is or isn't an outside-the-classroom component, the writing assignment will require critical thinking based on a larger analysis. In the case of an experiential or empirical aspect of the writing assignment, the student will frame the activity through extended and meaningful critical inquiry. For instance, the student may engage in the activity after an extensive inquiry of the topic. The standard example, which may not even be relevant now, relates to volunteering at a homeless shelter. The act alone will not inculcate an understanding of the complex challenges homelessness poses. If that activity is a part of the class, the

course must involve a detailed examination of the differing factors that create homelessness in addition to the challenges which might exist in dealing with it. Arguably, the activity should further that understanding which volunteering on one day might not accomplish. Perhaps, interviewing people in one's neighborhood on the local housing issues would be more useful. Then the student could assimilate the knowledge gained from that exercise with the larger class discussion. Questions could address the best approach to dealing with a certain issue, perhaps from a policy perspective or an activist approach.

5. It must be intellectually and conceptually ambitious. The CE writing assignment should be the culmination of the semester's class discussions and readings. Wherever it may land on the spectrum from civic awareness (student explores how an issue or topic connects with or arises from or impacts the social and political domain) to full-blown civic engagement (student actively participates in the social or political domain as part of their research), the project should challenge the student to broaden their views on the connection between individuals and the world.

The Reflective Essay In English 24 CE Courses

A new requirement of all KCC CE courses and co-curricular activities is that they include a "reflective essay" as a concluding experience of the course.. Samples of this "reflective essay" will be collected from all Eng 24-CE sections at the end of each semester for review by a centralized CE committee. KCC's description of the "reflective essay" requirement is as follows:

In order to encourage greater faculty and staff participation in developing civic engagement learning experiences, as well as to promote basic standards for civic engagement at KCC, a reflective essay containing the following questions will serve as the common assessment for all civic engagement experiences. A rubric has been developed to help faculty and staff assess civic engagement through the common essay. Faculty may add additional questions that meet the needs of their courses. In order to encourage the development and refinement of CE courses, faculty will have the opportunity to work with faculty peers who have been working on civic engagement.

Students in all CE courses, including English 24 CE Courses are required to reflect in writing on the the following:

- 1. Briefly describe how your class addressed social responsibility. You can reference an assignment, class discussion, and/or project in your answer.***
- 2. Explain how the course expanded your understanding of social responsibility.***
- 3. Thinking about your course and the information presented about social responsibility, how could you use this information to improve your community, address social problems, or promote equality?***

We recommend that faculty assign this short reflective writing towards the end of unit 3, once students have completed their full CE experience. Further, we recommend that each faculty member revise this assignment description to best serve their students in their individual courses. For example, a faculty member may wish to reframe the three questions (above) in a way that is more responsive to the theme of their particular course. They may also wish to add other questions that provide them and the students with the opportunity for valuable metacognitive reflection at the end of the course. Whether they revise this standard assignment or not, all English 24 faculty who opt to teach a CE-designated course commit to provide samples of these “reflective essays” at the end of their course. This reflective writing, while used for administrative “data capture” need not be read by the instructor or considered as one of the graded assignments in the course.

Sample Syllabus for English 24 CE Course, Including Mandatory CE Description and Learning Outcomes

Food Justice

English 24

Prof. Annie Del Principe

Class times: Tu/Th 10:20-12:30

Class location: tu M114/
th D215

Office hours: Mondays 11-2, and by appt

Offices: C303 & C309

Contact info: ann.delprincipe@kbcc.cuny.edu

Course Description

English 24 is an interdisciplinary reading, writing, and research course focusing on the various ways knowledge is produced and articulated within the academy. Through an interdisciplinary process of inquiry, students of English 24 will engage in several research projects, each of which will require them to deepen their knowledge of different modes of research and information literacy.

In this particular section of English 24, we will focus in on the issue of “food justice,” which has been a rising public and academic concern for well over a decade. What we explore the ways in which food is connected to other forms of inequity in our society – racial, social, and economic. In our various units, we will: get a grasp on the various aspects of food justice, zero in on an area that interests us, and plan, carry out, and write up a primary research project into an aspect of food justice that is relevant in our own communities. This section of Eng 24 carries credit toward students’ Civic Engagement (CE) requirement.

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 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)

Civic Engagement

This particular section of Eng 24 is offered as a Civic Engagement course. During unit 3 in particular, but infused throughout this course, are learning opportunities via which students will hone the following ethical practices:

- Recognizing that different attitudes and beliefs are as valuable as one's own.
- Examining the importance of behaving ethically and with due sensitivity towards social, cultural, economic, environmental, and academic issues.
- Understanding the individual's role in working towards equity.

Required Texts

- ***Food Justice*** by Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi [you can purchase this book in any format you prefer, but it is a required text for the course; you will need to have it on you and with you on many days of the semester; it is \$23.05 new on Amazon]
- Excerpts from ***Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*** eds. Allison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman[I will provide these readings as pdfs on our Blackboard site]
- ***Food, Inc.*** [film]
- Numerous other readings that will be posted on our Blackboard site

Types of Assignments

Three major formal writing assignments, one per unit. These papers will each go through two drafts (versions) before they are graded. If any paper has not been revised by its due date, it will receive an F. In addition, you will have the option of revising any of the major writing assignments a final, third, time for a possible increase in grade. There will be due dates for each required draft. Each of the projects requires research and proper documentation. You will submit all drafts of your major writing assignments on our Blackboard site.

Numerous Informal Writing Assignments (IWAs). These are your day-to-day “homework” assignments, as well as the small steps you will take to build up to each of the major writing assignments in each unit. There will be approximately 1 or 2 of these per week, roughly 5 per unit, for a total of around 12-15. These IWAs will be submitted via our class’ Blackboard site, on the “Discussion Forum.”

Means of Assessment

Your marks/grades in the course will be determined using a 100-point system for the entire semester. This means that there are 100 possible points for you to earn, via your work and performance, during the course. This is how the 100 points break down:

*Three major projects—#1=15pts; #s 2&3=20pts each; total=60 pts

*Informal Writing Assignments (IWAs)—These vary slightly in point value, but they add up to a possible total of 30 pts

*In-class work— Sometimes we decide to produce something during class time (solo or collaboratively) that counts for points. These won’t be announced in advance, and they cannot be made up later. These are very similar to IWAs (see above) and might combine with those. 10 pts total

*Preparation/Participation/Readiness for Class—Did you almost always arrive on time for class, having done the assigned work, with any required texts/work with

you, prepared and willing to engage meaningfully with me and with your peers? If so, you'll earn all 10 of these points!

****There is no midterm or final exam in this course.**

Attendance Policy

Attendance in college is critical for students' learning. Regular attendance ensures that you will have the opportunity to: learn from your professor; learn from your peers; participate in class discussions; keep up to date with in-class work, both individual and collaborative; take in-class quizzes and assessments that will occur throughout the semester. If at any point during the semester you simply stop attending class, you will be assigned a WU for this course. I will keep track of your attendance daily. If you miss more than 8 hours of class, I will begin to deduct 5 points off your total final grade for each subsequent hour you miss.

Our unit calendars and assignments are always available on our Bb site, so, if you miss a class period, it is your responsibility to consult the unit calendar to see what you have missed and what is due when you return. Being absent does not grant you an extension on work that was due.

If you have any questions or need help, please speak with me. Always let me know what is going on in your life, especially if you are having difficulties with the course or if your life is affecting your performance in class.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work” (www.dictionary.com). If you plagiarize in any of the work you submit in this English 24 course, the penalty will be an F (0) for the project—the entire project—in which you plagiarized material. Please realize that, depending on your grades on other projects, this F may result in a failing grade for the course.

At Kingsborough, plagiarism falls under the larger heading of Academic Dishonesty and is adjudicated by the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. To read a detailed description of each form of Academic Dishonesty, as well as descriptions of sanctions that may be enforced, please see the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity at <http://www.kingsborough.edu/sub-administration/sco/Documents/CUNYAcademicIntegrityPolicy.pdf>. Please know that, if there is an instance of plagiarism in your work for this Eng 24 course, I will file an official report with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

Statement on Accessibility

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Access-Ability Services, D-205, (718) 368-5175, as

soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.