

QUICK GUIDE to Teaching Writing Intensive Classes

Writing Intensive (W) courses are part of the overall goals for student writing at Queens College. As part of students' curriculum during their undergraduate careers, they will:

- Become fluent with the elements of academic writing, including thesis, motive, evidence, analysis, and style
- Practice the processes and methods commonly used by effective writers
- Take ownership of the language and rhetorical strategies they employ
- Develop a working knowledge of the grammar and mechanics of standard English
- Gain experience with the conventions of various genres, disciplines, and professions

For specific goals and for strategies with which faculty can help students meet these overall goals, please refer to: <http://writingatqueens.org/goals>

W Course Characteristics and Requirements

Writing Intensive classes at Queens College are designated with a W after the course number. If, for example, you are teaching an ENGL 170W, SOC 210W, or a PSYCH 211W, that means you are teaching a writing intensive course. Queens College students must complete two W courses in order to graduate.

The Academic Senate has determined that W classes must meet the following criteria:

- 10-15 pages of evaluated writing in three or more assignments (either separate papers or one term paper done in stages) so that students have the opportunity to develop and improve.
- Writing instruction during the class meeting, in one or more of the following possible forms:
 - discussion of papers before they are written and after they are returned.
 - reading aloud of successful papers or models.
 - discussion of the rhetorical strategies or writerly qualities of course readings.
 - the use of informal, ungraded writing to stimulate class discussion
 - peer editing: opportunities for students to give each other feedback on first drafts.
 - discussion of goals for student writing and evaluation criteria.
- Exams [if given] that include essay questions.
- Maximum class-size of 25 students. (as of Spring 2010)

Preparation for W courses

W courses have a prerequisite of 110, which means all students in your class have passed English 110 at Queens or completed an equivalent course at another school. English 110 is the College Writing 1 requirement at CUNY. The college encourages students to take their College Writing 2 course in the following semester but it is not a prerequisite for W courses. Also, many of the students at Queens are transfer students so instructors cannot assume they have taken their first composition course here.

English 110 is designed to give students a basic understanding of the principles and methods of college writing that they will continue to practice and master in their other classes. Ultimately the purpose of English 110 is to facilitate the entry of students into the cross-curricular dialogue of the college. It is not a grammar course. College Writing I will help students understand the recursive practices of reading, writing, thinking, and revision, which are central to the making and representation of knowledge.

In English 110, students will have engaged in many of the following practices: reading and analyzing scholarly essays with an eye toward its content and organization, participating in discussion-based classes, workshopping pieces of writing with peers, using and understanding the library's resources, discussing disciplinary differences, working with digital texts and environments, and helping to build a community of learners in their first year.

The learning goals for English 110 can also give you some idea about how students' prior experience with academic writing. Instructors may choose to represent a smaller number of these goals on a syllabus, or adapt them to suit their courses, instructors understand these goals as a fundamental component of the first-year writing program at Queens College.

Students who complete English 110 will have had instruction on how to:

1. Develop an awareness of the craft, rhetoric, and process of writing.
2. Identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing and articulate strategies for improvement.
3. Adapt the elements of writing—including thesis, audience, motive, evidence, analysis, and structure—to a variety of writing contexts.
4. Read critically and write fluently in a variety of genres, including the following possibilities in print and digital media: argumentative essays, narrative essays, ethnographic essays, case studies, blogs, letters to the editor, or wiki pages.
5. Understand the guidelines for a variety of assignments and to respond to these guidelines with imagination and ingenuity.
6. Articulate how rhetoric and ideas work together to produce meaning.
7. Revise and edit their work effectively.
8. Demonstrate a proficiency in methods of research and documentation, including the evaluation of secondary sources, annotation, integration of quotations, and proper citation according to a discipline appropriate guideline (such as MLA, APA, or Chicago).
9. Recognize the conventions and methods of various disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences.
10. Make connections with other courses in terms of both content and methods of critical inquiry.

Resources for Instructors Teaching W Classes

Writing at Queens page on W courses: <http://writingatqueens.qc.cuny.edu/for-students/w-courses/>
On this page, you can find Guides to Writing-Intensive Courses for Students and for Faculty

Queens College Writing Center: <http://www.qc.cuny.edu/Academics/SupportPrograms/SupportCenter/Pages/WritingCenter.aspx>

Students may be referred here for additional help from undergraduate tutors. Spaces are in high demand so refer students early in the semester if you feel they might need additional help.

Learning Through Writing: A Handbook for Students of College Writing 1 & 2 (pink book):
<http://writingatqueens.org/pink-book>

These handbooks are distributed to all students in College Writing 1 & 2 and thus may offer useful models for you to build on.