

First-Year Writing at the University of North Texas at Dallas



Instructor Handbook

Revised Fall 2022

Introduction

Welcome to First-Year Writing at the University of North Texas at Dallas. The first-year program consists of three courses and a common curriculum based upon current research and studies in composition, rhetoric, education and educational psychology. The purview of the First-Year Writing Program includes:

- ENGL 1313: Computer-Assisted College Writing I
- ENGL 1323: Computer-Assisted College Writing II
- TECM 2700: Technical Writing

This Guidebook will be divided into 6 sections: Program-Level Learning Goals and Guiding Pedagogical Principles, Course-Specific Learning Outcomes, Program Policies for Instructors of First-Year Writing, First-Year Writing Course Policies, Resources, and Common Syllabi. Together, these sections articulate a guiding framework and praxis for these crucial gateway courses.

Program-Level Learning Goals and Guiding Pedagogical Principles

Taking our direction from current composition and rhetoric theory, research, and pedagogy, and from professional guidelines and standards¹, each First-Year Writing course at UNT Dallas shares some common learning goals:

- Students will develop a strong understanding of rhetorical concepts, and be able to negotiate purpose, audience, context, and genre conventions as they compose and analyze a variety of texts from various fields and disciplines.
- Students will improve their critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and interpreting a wide variety of texts and genres.
- Students will develop flexible writing strategies as they compose texts through a series of drafts, learning to use myriad available resources and collaborating with others to improve their work.
- Students will understand differences in genre conventions, and work to recognize and negotiate the conventions of different genres by reading, analyzing, and composing texts from various fields.
- Students will learn basic research methodologies, including finding and evaluating sources, synthesizing information, integrating sources into their work, and citing information in ways appropriate for academic and professional contexts.
- Students will compose in multiple environments, including online and digital environments.
- Students will learn to collaborate effectively with others in creating and/or editing written, visual, and oral texts.
- Students will learn to monitor, reflect upon, critique, and refine their own work.

¹ See “WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition” by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) and “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” by the CWPA, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Writing Project (NWP).

In addition to these primary learning goals, the Writing Program has a number of important guiding pedagogical principles:

- First-Year Writing courses are *about writing*. Students should not only be *doing* writing, but *reading about, writing about, thinking about, and reflecting on* writing itself as the primary focus and activity of these courses.
- First-Year Writing courses are not the culmination of writing education for students: learning to write is a life-long process, and students will improve beyond First-Year Writing as they learn specific writing strategies, conventions, and habits of their fields and disciplines.
- First-Year Writing is the beginning of a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum approach to writing education: First-Year Writing must prepare students for writing in a wide variety of courses, fields, and genres, exposing them to conventions and contexts from across the University as well as their future professions.
- First-Year Writing is preparation for the real-world work students will do in their academic and professional careers; it is not self-contained writing “practice.” Thus, assigned genres should coincide with real academic and professional genres from a variety of majors, fields, and professional practices, and should be taught as instances of those genres.
- First-Year Writing courses are not “inoculation courses”² against all error; our expectation must be for significant improvement consistent with undergraduate and professional standards of communication.
- First-Year Writing courses (and other lower-division general education courses) often act as “gateway” courses for students (THECB 2012³); whether these gateway classes are in their major or are part of a basic or remedial sequence, research (Flanders 2015⁴) shows that students who struggle, fail, or have a negative experience in these courses are at a significantly increased risk of not only failing the course, but dropping out of school entirely. Therefore, we see the First-Year Writing experience as one of the most important that a student may have at our University, and have a special mission to move to students to college-level success.
- In addition to the cognitive educational goals of these courses, we also recognize the need to address non-cognitive components of student success and strive to create courses in which students feel a sense belonging, have independence in their work, feel accomplishment and growth, and are challenged by work they feel is important (Ryan and Deci 2000⁵).
- Students learn best through active learning practices in the classroom, and significant amounts of lecture are to be avoided in the writing classroom. Simply, ask yourself who is doing most of the work in the classroom – it should be the students rather than the instructor.

² Roen, D. & Lindblom, K. (1996). Using writing as an active learning tool.” In Lambert, L., Tice, S., & Featherstone, P. (eds.), *University teaching: A guide for students* (68-87). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U Press.

³ THECB (2011). *Institutional strategies for increasing postsecondary student success*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/download.cfm?downloadfile=4F4E87DE-A623-7B11BABF2EB0024925C0&typename=dmFile&fieldname=filename>

⁴ Flanders, G. (2015). The effect of gateway course completion on freshman college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice*. Retrieved from: <http://csr.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/10/16/1521025115611396.full.pdf+html>

⁵ Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes

The following learning outcomes are those that you find on the common syllabi for our First-Year Writing courses.

ENGL 1313 – Computer Assisted College Writing I

Common Assignments

- Literacy Narrative
- Discourse Communities Analysis
- Entering New Discourse Communities
- Academic Discourse Essay

UNTD Core Assessment Assignment

- Academic Discourse Essay

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

- Students will develop an understanding and control of rhetorical principles through the analysis, evaluation, and creation of written, oral, and visual texts o Instrument: Discourse Communities Analysis

COMMUNICATION:

- Students will develop an awareness and improve their control of writing and genre conventions from various disciplines o Instrument: Discourse Communities Analysis
- Students will develop flexible writing processes and composing strategies for creating effective written, oral, and visual texts o Instrument: Academic Discourse Essay

TEAMWORK:

- Students will develop abilities to collaborate effectively with their peers on written, oral, or visual texts o Instrument: Entering New Discourse Communities

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- Students will develop habits of monitoring, evaluating, and refining their work to meet the expectations of the course o Instrument: Literacy Narrative

ENGL 1323 – Computer Assisted College Writing II

Common Course Parameters

- Research paper of 5-10 pages
- Annotated Bibliography
- Creation of Primary Research
- Focus on APA style

UNTD Core Assessment Assignment

- Final Paper

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

- Students will further develop abilities in logically analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing written, oral, and visual texts from a range of disciplines ○ Instrument: Written, oral, or visual text

COMMUNICATION:

- Students will develop abilities to create complex arguments by responding to and incorporating ideas and information from various researched sources ○ Instrument: Written, oral, or visual text
- Students will develop abilities to search, evaluate, choose, and cite appropriate information and sources for research and argumentative purposes ○ Instrument: Written, oral, or visual text

TEAMWORK:

- Students will develop abilities in collaborating effectively with their peers on written, oral, or visual texts ○ Instrument: Written, oral, or visual text OR evaluation of collaborative effort OR peer review

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- Students will develop habits of monitoring, evaluating, and refining their work to meet the expectations of the course ○ Instrument: Self-analysis/reflection OR work journals

TECM 2700 – Technical Writing

Common Assignments

- Business Proposal
- Research Prospectus

UNTD Core Assessment Assignment

- Research Prospectus

CRITICAL THINKING:

- Understanding contexts in which professional and technical writing takes place
- Adapting writing to the demands of specific professional situations and audiences
- Understanding how professional and technical documents are composed to meet the needs of workplace tasks and audiences

COMMUNICATION:

- Formatting professional documents effectively through the use of software
- Communicating in written, visual, and web-mediated modes of writing
- Understanding the writing process strategies of experienced writers
- Understanding and using relevant citation practices in professional fields
- Searching for and evaluating appropriate information for technical communication

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- Understanding the ethical and legal implications of various professional genres and tasks □ Reflecting on and assessing progress in the course and individual assignments

TEAMWORK:

- Working effectively and productively with peers of different backgrounds

Programmatic Policies for Instructors of First-Year Writing

The sections below outline some of the classroom behaviors and attitudes that help lead to successful student experiences.

Common Grading Rubric for Student Writing

Instructors are strongly encouraged to use a grading rubric for student essays that is focused on the five elements of academic writing: format, content, organization, research/citation, and grammar. A general rubric will be provided to all instructors who can adjust the rubric for their courses and writing assignments.

Canvas

Instructors **must** use Canvas to post grades for students as soon as possible after an assignment is graded. Instructors in face-to-face courses are strongly encouraged to post all course materials on Canvas for students to access inside and outside of class. Any instructor who needs guidance on doing so should see the Writing Program Director or the office of Distance Learning and Instructional Technology.

Return of Student Work

A great deal of research in composition, education, and cognitive psychology has shown that students learn best through immediate feedback, and that the longer the wait between a student completing their work and it being returned with feedback, the less learning that occurs⁶. Thus, all student work, including major written projects and drafts, should be returned to students no later than ten (10) days from the due date of the assignment.

Early Substantive Assignment

Early in the semester, students should have an idea of where they stand in the class, how work will be evaluated, and what resources they will need to bring to bear upon their writing to make progress during the semester. Thus, instructors must assign, grade, and return an assignment that receives substantive feedback (this may be a journal or discussion board, a short in-class writing, a minor writing project, etc.) within the first three weeks of the semester, but preferably within two weeks.

Grammar

Although the assumption and hope is that students will come to college with exceptional foundational writing skills with respect to grammar and mechanics, it is often the case that students are under-prepared in these areas. While we recognize the importance of solid foundational skills for our graduates – both as a matter of employability and as a matter of cognitive load (Kellogg & Whiteford 2009)⁷ – it is also the case that multiple meta-analyses of writing instruction (Hillocks 1984⁸, Graham and Perrin 2007⁹) have shown that explicit, solitary grammar instruction – skill and drill, grammar quizzes, sentence analysis – is one of the least effective teaching methods for overall writing improvement.

In light of these matters, the Writing Program and UNT Dallas approaches grammar and mechanics instruction in several specific ways. First, instructors should generally teach grammar through a grammar-in-context

⁶ Bransford, J. D., Brown, A.L. & Cocking, R. R. (eds.) *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. Washington, D.C: National Academy Press.

⁷⁷ Kellogg, R. T., & Whiteford, A. P. (2009). Training Advanced Writing Skills: The Case for Deliberate Practice. *Educational Psychologist*, 44(4), 250–266. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00461520903213600>

⁸ Hillocks, G. (1984). What Works in Teaching Composition; A Meta-Analysis of Experimental Treatment Studies. *American Journal of Education*, 93(1), 133–170.

⁹ Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). A Meta-Analysis of Writing Instruction for Adolescent Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 445–476.

method, which evaluates and teaches grammar only in the written work that a student has created, and not in solitary and separate exercises. Second, the Writing Program understands that First-Year Writing courses cannot be an “inoculation” against all error, as language and grammar learning is a lengthy process (citation) and much evidence points to the fact that while grammar instruction may help, mechanical competency is achieved more through acquisition, or by reading and writing a great deal. While we expect students to improve significantly in these areas, our expectation is not for perfection or graduate-level work by the end of First-Year Writing.

In general, then, when responding to student work with grammatical and mechanical issues, instructors should primarily focus on marking and commenting upon errors that recur several times in student work, or errors that prevent or significantly cloud reader understanding. In addition, when grading and commenting on student work, instructors should factor in higher-order concerns (organization, meaning, and writing to rhetorical concerns such as purpose, audience, and genre conventions) more than lower-order concerns (spelling, mechanics, grammar).

This policy does not preclude the administration of initial diagnostic assessments of grammar and mechanics to determine specific student issues that need to be addressed, even if these come in the form of a quiz or test. This policy also does not prevent the use of quizzes, tests, and drills in developmental courses (UGRW 1200), where grammar and mechanical improvement is the primary goal of the course.

Finally, the Writing Center, housed in the University Learning Commons, is a significant resource for helping students with these kinds of issues. Although the Writing Center will not directly edit student work, they can help students with specific mechanical and grammatical issues. Make sure that the student and the Writing Center are clear about what specific issues that need to be worked on. Students can also take advantage of grammar editing tools such as Grammarly.

Treatment of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious concern in both academic and professional work, and plagiarizing sources is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy of the University. However, First-Year Writing has a special responsibility and role to educate students on proper research, citation, and avoidance of plagiarism. Therefore, when plagiarism arises or is discovered in student work, our first response should be to educate the student on the issues that have arisen in their writing.

Although it is always the prerogative of the instructor to report egregious violations of the University plagiarism policy to the Writing Program Director or University officials (please refer the University Academic Honesty Policy for how to initiate a report), it is the preference of the Writing Program to give a warning to students committing a first plagiarism offense and explain to them the errors they are committing so that they may learn from them and improve their writing. Instructors are encouraged to withhold a grade or even assign a temporary “zero” to a paper that has a plagiarism violation, letting the student revise to fix the error, then assigning an appropriate evaluative grade to the paper when requisite changes have been made.

For repeat plagiarism violations, instructors should exert effort to determine if the violation is a continued misunderstanding of proper citation practices. If the instructor determines that there is still misunderstanding, students may be referred to the Writing Center or Writing Program Director for intervention, though it is important overall to treat genuine misunderstanding with continued education and allow for revision.

For students found to be purposefully or willfully committing plagiarism, instructors should notify the Writing Program Director and begin steps to document the plagiarism to University officials so that a record is kept for all students.

Assessment

At the end of each semester, instructors of ENGL 1313, ENGL 1323, and TECM 2700 must perform an assessment of their courses, according to the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), as these courses also resided in the University Core Curriculum. The Writing Program Director will send instructions on completing these assessments toward the end of each semester. Specific assessment assignments are listed above in the information for each specific course.

Course Policies for Syllabi

As one major goal of the Writing Program is for students to have a similar experience across sections, the Writing Program sets the common following policies for all courses. These policies can be found already in the common syllabi used for these courses.

Late Work

Late work policies are at the discretion of individual instructors. Students will be encouraged to turn work in on time and to meet with the instructor if they are falling behind in the course.

Attendance

Attendance in class is required. In each 15-week semester, students may have up to four (4) unexcused absences. After these four unexcused absences, a student's final grade may be reduced at the discretion of the instructor. After six (6) unexcused absences, the student may fail the class due to an absence failure.

In each 8-week semester, students may have up to two (2) unexcused absences. After these two unexcused absences, a student's final grade may be reduced at the discretion of the instructor. After four (4) unexcused absences, the student may fail the class due to an absence failure.

Absences may be considered excused only if 1) students have made pre-arranged plans with the instructor for events and circumstances that are appropriate for missing class or 2) the student has documentation (timestamped picture, official note, dated materials) of extenuating circumstances.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. You are expected to abide by the University's code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University's policies and procedures.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Writing Center Bonus Points

Good writers do not write in a vacuum; rather, they seek feedback and assistance from many people and groups. One of the best resources to use on campus is the Writing Center, where a trained writing consultant can help students review and revise their papers, no matter what stage they're at. Instructors are encouraged to provide grade bonuses to students that visit the Writing Center.

Revision Policy

For each major project in the course, students have the option to revise and resubmit the project one more time after the instructor has given feedback and a grade on it. Revisions that substantially improve the project will earn new grades, and those grades will replace the older score.

To qualify, revisions must change the paper in significant and substantial ways; revisions that only correct mechanical errors will not be eligible for new grades.

CourseEval

Student's evaluations of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider students' evaluations to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Bad Weather Policy

Campus facilities will close and operations will be suspended when adverse weather and/or safety hazards exist on the UNTD campus or if travel to the campus is deemed dangerous as the result of ice, sleet or snow. In the event of a campus closure, the Marketing and Communication Department will report closure information to all appropriate major media by 7 a.m.

Diversity/Tolerance Policy

Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions. However, offensive and inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions which violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Dean of Students as the instructor deems appropriate. (UNTD Policy 7.001)

Resources for Writing Program Faculty and Students

It should be impressed upon students that good writers use resources well to succeed and writing. We therefore want to share and underscore the use of resources that will assist students in becoming better writers outside of our immediate classroom. Instructors are free to have students use any resources that are beneficial and in line with the learning goals and guidelines of First-Year Writing, but below are several that are recommended by the Program.

Writing Program Online Resource Guide

Instead of a traditional, costly, printed handbook, the Writing Program utilizes various open-source resources including the **Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)**.

The Purdue OWL is a free online writing handbook provided to all UNT Dallas students. It was created by Purdue University, one of the foremost composition and rhetoric programs in the nation. The OWL covers just about every basic writing topic, including robust and up-to-date resources on MLA and APA citation rules. The Writing Program will be using and referencing material from the OWL as part of their replacement of a traditional handbook.

Writing Center

The Writing Center is a significant and important resource for First-Year Writing classes, and students should be referred to the Writing Center especially when specific issues are found in their writing. While attendance at the Writing Center should not be a mandatory requirement of all students in a class, Writing Center attendance will be encouraged in each First-Year Writing class through a bonus point system. For each time they attend the Writing Center, students may earn 10 points of bonus credit (or an equivalent of 1% of their final grade), with a limit of 50 bonus points (or an equivalent of 5% of their final grade). Students must ask the Writing Center for proof of their visit to be sent to their instructor.

Grammarly

Grammarly is a writing enhancement platform that can be integrated into Google Chrome, MS Office, and Windows. In addition to notifying writers about grammar and spelling errors, Grammarly provides links to explanations and information about these errors and how to correct them. Grammarly has a free and paid version, but the free version should be adequate for most student purposes.

Nota Bene: If you choose to use this application, you may urge students to turn Grammarly on only during later editing phases of writing so that in early drafting stages, they primarily focus on higher order concerns and don't get bogged down in lower-order concerns.

Smart Thinking

Smart Thinking is a free online tutoring platform. Students may submit their papers and get feedback from tutors. Especially consider this in online classes where students may not have good access to the Writing Center.

Various Writing Resources

For a collection of writing resources including formatting, research, grammar, etc., please visit <https://www.blueletters.com/writing-resources>

UNTD Library

To access library resources, researching information, academic journals, etc., please visit the UNTD library site at <https://library.untDallas.edu/home>

English and Writing Program

Department of Languages, Linguistics, and Rhetoric

Socials: Instagram @lang_ling_rhet Tik Tok: @lang_ling_rhet

Major in Applied English (120 hours)

Minor in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (6 classes)

Minor in Applied Linguistics (7 classes)

Why get this major or minors?

Become more marketable to employers

Become a more complex writer

Become a more complex thinker about language and communication

Because all careers use writing and communication

Classes Commonly on Schedule

- ENGL 2347 Hip Hop Rhetoric
- ENGL 3319 Rhetoric of Race/Racism
- ENGL 2100: Creative Writing
- TECM 2300 New Media Writing
- LING 3390: Internet Languages
- LING 2380: How English Works
- ENGL 2220: World Literature
- TECM 2700 Technical Writing
- ENGL 3921: African American Literature
- HIST 4155: Mexican American Autobiography
- ENGL 1313: College Writing I
- ENGL 1323: College Writing II
- LING 3370: Introduction to Linguistics

More Information

Go to UNTDallas.edu and search for Applied English or Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Email Dr. Robert Tinajero at Robert.Tinajero@untdallas.edu

Degree Plans for Applied English Major, Rhetoric and Writing Studies Minor, and Applied Linguistics Minor

Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Applied English	
Category	Semester Credit Hours
General Education Core Curriculum (bachelor's degree only)	42
Required Courses	18
Other Major Requirements	24
Career Readiness & Internship/Capstone	6
Free Electives	30
TOTAL	120

Minor in Rhetoric and Writing Studies	
Foundation (choose 2) ENGL 1313 – College Writing I ENGL 1323 – College Writing II LING 2380 - How English Works	6 cr/hrs
Literature (choose 1) ENGL 2220 – World Literature ENGL 3921 - African-American Literature ENGL 2100 - Introduction to Creative Writing ENGL 2326 - American Literature ENGL 2342 - Diversity in Literature HIST 4155 - Mexican American Autobiography	3 cr/hrs
New Media and Technical Writing (choose 1) TECM 2300 – New Media Writing TECM 2700- Technical Writing	3 cr/hrs
Rhetoric (choose 2) ENGL 2377 – Introduction to Rhetorical Studies ENGL 2344 – Rhetoric and Society ENGL 2347 – Hip Hop Rhetoric ENGL 3319 – Rhetoric of Race and Racism ENGL 3376 – History of Composition Studies	6 cr/hrs
TOTAL	18 cr/hrs

Minor in Linguistics	
Foundation (choose one) LING 3370 Introduction to Linguistics LING 3060 Principles of Language Study	3 cr/hrs
Language Structure LING 2380 How English Works LING 4020 Structure of Modern English	6 cr/hrs
Language and Technology LING 2050 Language of Now LING 3390 Discourse Analysis: E-languages and Beyond	6 cr/hrs
Advanced Linguistic Study (choose two) LING 4030 Acquisition of English as a Second Language LING 4040 Phonetics and Phonology	6 cr/hrs
TOTAL	21 cr/hrs