

Outline of Requirements for WR 150
AY 2012-2013
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I. Introduction

This document parallels the *Outline of Requirements for WR 100* for AY 2011-2012. Like that document, it establishes a framework of requirements designed to promote and maintain an appropriate consistency across WR 150 sections while also accommodating a range of teaching styles and seminar topics. For advice, suggestions, and sample teaching materials (syllabi, class activities, assignments, etc.), see the Teaching Resources section of the WPNet.

Changes from AY 2011-2012: These requirements for all WR100 sections have been updated from 2011-2012 in consultation with the Writing Program's leadership team (curriculum coordinators, Writing Center coordinators, committee chairs). Specific changes include the following:

- *Streamlining of the portfolios:* We are establishing a minimum requirement that portfolios include an introduction and the final versions of the three major papers plus 3-5 artifacts. You are responsible for crafting your own portfolio assignment, and you are certainly encouraged to do more with the portfolios if you would like.
- *Timely feedback:* It has come to our attention that students have varying and sometimes unrealistic expectations for how quickly instructors should provide feedback on papers. We therefore encourage you to include a statement in your syllabus that tells students explicitly how soon they should expect feedback from you once they submit a paper. The general expectation is that drafts will receive feedback within one week of submission and that final versions of papers will be graded and returned within two weeks of submission, but in the syllabus template's suggested paragraph devoted to this matter, we have left blank the exact time frames you may want to announce to your students.
- *Reduced total word-count/page-count for major papers:* The curriculum assessment and conversations with individual instructors suggest that the long papers required in WR 150 may be limiting our ability to focus intensively in WR 150 on students' prose style. We have therefore reduced the minimum word-count/page-count for finished writing from 6,500 words/20 pages to 5,500

words/17 pages to allow students and instructors to give more attention to sentence-level style. In other words, we're going for quality over quantity. Many students will write more than that, and you can keep the old minimum if you wish.

Experimentation and Innovation: If our curriculum is to remain fresh, stimulating, and relevant, we must be open to innovations. Instructors are therefore encouraged to experiment with their courses in consultation with the program's administration. If you would like to try out an idea that would require you to depart from the requirements outlined in this document, please discuss your plans with one of the curriculum coordinators or with one of the directors.

Section II: This section describes the core skills, experiences, and points of knowledge every student should have or acquire in WR 150.

Section III: This section outlines the concrete work required of students in the course. These requirements are framed broadly, so that you may instantiate them as appropriate to your individual section or sections.¹

Section IV: This section sets some basic expectations for syllabi, feedback on students' work, and the format of assignment sheets.

Section V: This section presents your options for the weighting of various elements of the course in the calculation of final grades. Section VI explains the program's procedures for syllabus review and for the curriculum assessment.

In each of these sections, requirements are presented in the main text, while recommendations, suggestions, and explanations are presented as endnotes.

II Core Skills and Points of Knowledge

WR 100 begins by focusing on "mid-level" concerns such as reading, argumentation, and organization and comes increasingly to emphasize "low-level" concerns such as sentence-level style and usage and "high-level" concerns such as information literacy.² WR 150 should build on the skills and knowledge students develop in WR 100 (e.g., problem statements, summary, acknowledgement and response) while giving increased attention to both "low-level" and "high-level" concerns. In particular, WR 150 should build on what students learn in WR 100 while introducing them to college-level research and research-based writing.

Likewise, while WR 100 aims, especially early in the semester, to help students develop and expand their repertoires of reading and writing skills, WR 150 aims, especially as the semester progresses, to give students opportunities for practicing choice and judgment. For additional information about WR 100 and the progression from WR 100 to WR 150, see the following documents, available on the WPNet: *Outline of Requirements for WR 100* and *WR 100/WR 150 Timeline*.

Problems, Reasons and Evidence, Acknowledgement and Response: While WR 150 builds on all aspects of WR 100, it is particularly important to continue developing students' abilities to imagine interesting problems to address and to explain these in their papers (i.e. standard introduction) and to continue emphasizing reasons and evidence and acknowledgment and response.

Research and Information Literacy: Research, narrowly construed, is the act of locating and accessing information; construed more broadly, it is also the ability to formulate interesting questions and problems and to develop deliberate strategies for answering or addressing them. Information literacy the ability to read, understand, engage with, and use the information one locates and accesses. In WR 150, students should learn not only to locate information but, more important, to develop interesting projects to pursue. Students should also come to understand that texts have forms that have evolved or have been designed to facilitate certain reading practices. By the end of the WR 100/150 sequence, students should habitually ask themselves how a given text is structured and what reading practices that structure encourages.

Prose Style: The course requirements for WR 100 ask instructors to emphasize content, organization, and argumentation in the first half of the semester and, by corollary, to refrain from emphasizing matters of sentence-level style until at least midway through WR 100. The reason for this recommendation is that sentence-level issues are addressed most effectively when students have a grasp of academic argumentation and principles of organization. In WR 150, students should have significant opportunities to work intensively on their prose style. They should also develop an understanding of the principles of citation and receive practice with at least one citation format. Indeed, for 2012-2013, we have reduced the minimum required word-count/page-count for finished work in the course so that students can give increased attention to local matters of style.

III. Course Requirements for Students

Self-Assessment: Within the first two weeks of the semester, all students must submit written self-assessments in which they take stock of their abilities as readers and writers and set some learning goals for themselves. In WR 150, the self-assessment should facilitate students' transition from WR 100 to WR 150. At your discretion, you may require students to draw on their final portfolios from WR 100. Remember that most students taking WR 150 in the spring will have written lengthy portfolio introductions only a month earlier. You therefore need to ensure that the self-assessment you assign for WR 150 is not redundant. Our recommendation is that you emphasize the forward-looking aspects of the self-assessment. What goals do they want to set for themselves now?

Three Major Papers: In WR 150, students must complete three polished papers totaling 5,500-8,000 words (17-25 pages).³ With the possible exception of the second paper (see below) these papers should be academic arguments involving at least three sources, at

least one of which must be an exhibit and at least one of which must be an argument source.

Paper 1: Expertise and Transfer: The first paper should be similar in kind to the second or third paper in WR 100. This paper has two main purposes. First, it gives you an opportunity to introduce students to your course topic, to begin establishing the *foundation of expertise* on which they will draw in their later research papers. Second, it gives students an opportunity to *transfer* what they learned in WR 100 to the new context of WR 150. Use this assignment to help students apply and use the skills they developed in WR 100 in the new context of your WR 150 class. Remember that writers' competence declines when they move from an area of relative expertise to an area of relative ignorance (i.e., from writing about a topic they've spent 14 weeks thinking about to writing about a new topic for a new teacher). You can imagine this assignment as a reprise of paper 2 or paper 3 from WR 100. It should be about the same length and have about the same degree of scaffolding or constraints. In this paper, students should be writing largely about materials provided by the instructor. Little if any "outside" research should be *required* for this paper. If you wish, you may give students the *option* of using outside materials and ask them to do some modest work in the library or with online databases in anticipation of later assignments.

Paper 2: Transition: Paper 2 is a *transitional* assignment that prepares students for the third paper, the capstone assignment for the WR 100/150 sequence. Your assignment can have some scaffolding, but you should also give your students increased latitude to define and shape their own research and writing projects. If you have not yet done so, you should introduce students to library/database research, and you should create opportunities for students to practice *selecting* materials to use in their writing from the array of materials at their disposal (those assigned by you, those they have found through their own research).

For the second paper of WR 150, as for the second paper of WR 100, you may have students write source-based academic arguments or papers in an alternative genre. Whichever option you choose, this paper should involve some research and should play the transitional role described above. If you choose to assign a paper in an alternative genre (e.g., imaginative dialog, personal essay, ethnography, memoir, review), your assignment should be structured and framed so that it contributes to the course's overarching goal of teaching students to write source-based academic arguments. *If you choose this option, please notify the Writing Program of your choice by emailing your assignment sheet to wpadmin@bu.edu.*

Paper 3: Capstone: This paper is the *capstone* paper for the WR 100/150 sequence. It should require significant outside research and should be roughly 2,500 words in length. Students should have significant latitude in defining their research and writing projects. At this point in the semester, you should be introducing few if any new concepts or skills; rather, the emphasis should be on helping students integrate and apply the concepts and skills they have learned over the entirety of the WR 100/150 sequence to produce a substantial, researched academic argument.

Exercises (In-Class or Take-Home): Exercises are short, low-stakes assignments or activities. Students are expected to complete exercises as assigned. As a teacher, you can use exercises for a range of purposes:

- to teach or reinforce specific reading and writing skills
- to structure students' engagement with the course materials
- to frame or prime class discussions
- to provide opportunities for metacognitive or reflective work
- to help students plan their papers (e.g., précis, outlines, project plans)
- to facilitate research
- to facilitate drafting, revision, and workshopping.

This list is not exhaustive. Exercises need not receive formal grades. If you do grade exercises, they should cumulatively count for no more than 10% of the course grade.⁴

One sort of exercise is worthy of special note: the annotated bibliography. Because WR 150 emphasizes research and information literacy, annotated bibliographies can be especially valuable. You are encouraged to have students compile and share annotated bibliographies of their research findings and/or of the materials you assign. You are encouraged to have your students collaborate in their research and to contribute their findings to a class "archive" (which will also include materials made available by you). Use of electronic bibliographic tools such as RefWorks or Zotero (individual and/or class site) is encouraged.

Conferences: You are required to hold one formal, individual conference with each student. You are encouraged to hold multiple conferences (individual or group) with your students if you find conferences an effective way to teach. It is acceptable to hold conferences with students to discuss their work in progress in lieu of writing extensive comments on drafts.

Participation and Attendance: As described in syllabus template and below.

Library Orientation: You should schedule at least one class visit to the library. The orientation should familiarize students with the library's physical layout and introduce them to the various ways in which information is stored, organized, and accessed. For additional information about the library orientation and about connecting with your assigned reference librarian, consult the handout on the WPNet.

Final Portfolio: Each student must submit a final portfolio demonstrating his or her progress toward the course goals. These portfolios have two related purposes. First, the portfolios provide students with an opportunity to reflect on and synthesize what they have learned in your class, which increases the likelihood that students will be able to transfer what they have learned to other contexts. Second, the portfolios allow the program to collect and review samples of actual student work in conjunction with the annual curriculum assessment.

The final portfolio must contain at least (1) an introduction in which the student assesses his or her progress toward the course goals, (2) final versions of the three major papers, and (3) three-to-five additional selected artifacts (e.g., drafts, exercises, notes) documenting the assertions in the introduction. *Please note that these requirements are minimum requirements. Instructors are welcome and indeed encouraged to do more with the portfolios if they wish.*

You are responsible for developing your own portfolio assignment. For examples, see the WPNet. You may collect portfolios from your students in whatever form you wish: on paper, as .pdf documents, as Word documents, or in Digication.⁵

A sample of students' final portfolios will be collected by the Writing Program for assessment at the end of the semester. You must submit these portfolios to the program in electronic form. Instructions on how to submit portfolios for assessment will be provided in a separate memo.

IV. Additional Requirements for Instructors

Syllabus: You should provide students with a detailed syllabus that describes the course goals, outlines course policies and grading practices, and identifies due dates for readings and major assignments. Certain sections of our syllabi, such as the statement of course goals, will be common across all sections. Please see the syllabus template for additional information about this requirement.

Assignment Sheets: You should give students a detailed assignment sheet for each major paper. These assignment sheets should have the following sections:

- Goals or Purpose: What specifically are students supposed to learn or learn to do as they write this paper? Use this section to frame the assignment in terms of the course goals.
- Prompt, Tasks, or Questions: What specifically are students supposed to do? This section should be relatively succinct. Save commentary for the Notes/Comments section.
- Formatting and Submission Instructions: How long should the paper be? What documentation format should students use? What are the due dates for drafts and for the finished version? How should the paper be submitted (hardcopy, Blackboard dropbox, Digication)? Etc.
- Notes or Comments (Optional): Use this section to offer additional suggestions, explications, or elaborations.

Feedback: You are obligated to provide timely, *formative* feedback on at least one draft of each major paper. You are obligated to provide your students with timely, written, *summative* feedback and grades on the final version of each of the three major papers. It has come to our attention that students have varying and sometimes unrealistic expectations for how quickly instructors should provide feedback on papers. We therefore encourage you to include a statement in your syllabus that tells students explicitly how soon they should expect feedback from you once they submit a paper. The

general expectation is that drafts will receive feedback within one week of submission and that final versions of papers will be graded and returned within two weeks of submission; in the syllabus template's suggested paragraph devoted to this matter, we have left blank the exact time frames you may want to announce to your students.⁶

V. Evaluation

Weighting of Coursework in Final Grades:

- Major Papers (distributed across three papers): 70%
- Portfolio (introduction, framing, selection, organization, etc.): 10%
- Discretionary: 20%

The discretionary 20% can be distributed as you choose. Options include:

- grading the self-assessment (up to 5%)
- grading participation (up to 5%)
- grading exercises (up to 10% total)
- increasing the weights of the major papers (up to 90% total)
- increasing the weight of the portfolio (up to 15% total).

The principle informing these weights is that grades should be determined primarily by the quality of students' writing. In essence, we teach the process but grade the product.

Grading Portfolios: *When grading the portfolio, you should not re-grade work that has already been graded.* The 10% allocated to the portfolio is for those elements unique to the portfolio: the introduction, any additional framing (e.g., annotations, captions), the selection and arrangement of artifacts, the organization of the portfolio, etc. The weight you assign to the final portfolio should be commensurate with the portfolio's prominence in your class. For most sections, the portfolio should count for 10% of the final grade. If the portfolio plays an especially significant role in your course, you may increase the weight of the assignment to 15%.

Participation and Attendance: Attendance should be accounted for, if it is graded at all, as outlined in the syllabus template. This template contains a new attendance policy created by the Curriculum Committee. Participation may be accounted for in one of two ways: as part of the final course grade (up to 5%) or as an after-the-fact adjustment to the final grade (+/- one third of a letter grade). *These methods are mutually exclusive. If you opt to assign participation an explicit weight, you should not also make an after-the-fact adjustment. Likewise, if you opt to make an after-the-fact adjustment you should not also assign participation an explicit weight.*⁷

IV. Program Requirements:

Syllabus Review: All WR 100 and WR 150 syllabi will be reviewed by the Writing Program to ensure that they have implemented these requirements in a reasonable fashion. You should submit your syllabus for Fall 2012 to the Writing Program by Monday, August 13, 2012. Deadlines for submission of syllabi for Spring 2013 will be announced in a separate memo.

Curriculum Assessment: At the end of the semester, the Writing Program will solicit selected students' final portfolios as part of its curriculum assessment. Instructors will receive a list of names from the program and will be expected to submit portfolios to the Writing Program as instructed.

Notes

¹ This document draws on a vocabulary (BEAM/BEAT) that characterizes sources in terms of how writers use them in texts. For additional information about this vocabulary and its relationship to the conventional terms for sources (primary, secondary, tertiary), consult the WPNet. You can find a full account of this nomenclature in Bizup, Joseph. “BEAM: A Rhetorical Vocabulary for Teaching Research-Based Writing.” *Rhetoric Review* 27.1 (2008): 72-86.

² For details about the core skills and points of knowledge students should develop in WR 100, as well as information about the common vocabulary students should bring with them from that course, see the *Outline of Requirements for WR 100*. Instructors who teach WR 150 primarily or exclusively should still familiarize themselves with this document.

³ We have specified paper lengths in the aggregate so that you can structure your assignments as appropriate for your class and the needs of your students. Ordinarily, papers should increase in length as the semester progresses.

⁴ This restriction on the cumulative weight of the exercises reflects the fact that the exercises are not ends but means. Students who take the exercises seriously can be expected to write better final papers and to make more progress toward the course’s learning goals. Moreover, students’ final portfolios can include selected exercises as supporting artifacts. Their work on the exercises will therefore be reflected, albeit indirectly, in the grades they receive on both their papers and their portfolios.

⁵ The curriculum assessments conducted during the summers of 2010 and 2011 suggest that some students are treating the portfolio introductions as course evaluations. That is not their purpose. The portfolio instructions should call for assessments of students’ development as writers, using as evidence the writing they have produced over the course of the semester, and perhaps other writing as well. You are also encouraged to give students a degree of latitude in their introductions. The requirement that they reflect on their progress toward the course goals is not intended to keep them from addressing other issues of interest or concern to them: their progress toward the personal goals articulated in their self-assessments, insights about their writing that do not fit under any particular goal, shifts in their perspectives toward college and academic work, reflections on the topics or themes of the seminar, etc.

⁶ *Formative* feedback is feedback that has as its primary purpose helping students improve the quality of their papers or writing. *Summative* feedback is feedback that is primarily evaluative. Its purpose is to provide an assessment of the paper and to justify the grade. The conventional way of delivering both sorts of feedback is through marginal annotations and written comments. But formative feedback can be delivered in other ways as well, such as in student conferences or in voice recordings provided to the student. You may hold conferences (individual or group) to discuss students’ work-in-

progress or give your students audio comments in lieu of providing extensive written comments on drafts. Because summative feedback is evaluative, it should be presented in written form. The rule against grading drafts follows from the principle that students' grades should be determined primarily by the quality of their finished work.

⁷ The advantage of giving participation an explicit weight is that the explicit grade signals that participation is important. The disadvantage is that this method requires you to render specific judgment on the participation of each student; there is no "neutral" option. What grade do you give for adequate participation? The advantage of treating participation as an after-the-fact adjustment is it relieves instructors from the obligation of rendering such judgments in most cases. Adequate participation is expected and therefore warrants no adjustment. Adjustments can be reserved for cases in which participation is truly superior or inferior. This practice is consistent with the principle that students' grades should be determined primarily by the quality of their major papers and portfolios.