

What to Expect from First-Year Writing (A Note from the Writing Program Staff)

People write to many different audiences, and for many reasons—to remember, to learn, to inform, to entertain, to persuade. Writing operates quite differently depending on the time, place and audience for which it is written. During First-Year Writing (FWS), you will work on writing for different audiences and purposes—some academic, some not. What we hope you'll discover is that there is no uniform idea of “good writing.” Writing can be either successful or unsuccessful in meeting its objectives, depending on the audience, the approach of the writer, the genre, and the time and place of the writing. Writing a successful research report is not the same thing as writing a persuasive newspaper article or a funny email or a moving personal story. By the end of this course, we hope you will have learned strategies for understanding a given occasion for writing (known as a *rhetorical situation*) and tools for approaching writing as a process that feels productive and helps you achieve your purpose.

The best way to practice writing strategies in a class is to have a shared inquiry: shared questions or ideas your class will investigate together. One inquiry might relate to language and its power or lack of power in the world. Other inquiries might concern identity. Some might concern conceptions of place, and how places define us. The specific nature of each inquiry matters less than the ways such questions encourage you as writers to develop your own ideas, and to work creatively.

During FWS, our hope is that you will write and read texts that will be enjoyable, challenging, and significant to you. That significance, however, rests on the knowledge that there are many other worthwhile things to read and write. We hope this course continues your ongoing relationship with writing in fun, useful, and engaging ways.

Course Objectives:

While the readings and specific assignments will vary section to section for FWS, all courses will ask students to work on the following skills, which determine how the course will be graded. By the end of the course, you will be asked to assemble a portfolio of writing to demonstrate the following:

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Be able to focus on a purpose and respond to the needs of different audiences.
- Understand that different rhetorical situations (consisting of audience, writer, purpose, time and culture) require adopting appropriate voice, tone, level of formality, genre and format.
- Write in several genres.

Critical Reading and Writing

- Use reading and writing as a means of critical inquiry, which means working to understand, summarize, and analyze the ideas of others.
- Understand academic writing assignments as a series of tasks including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources.
- Integrate your ideas with those of others.

Processes

- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create a successful text.

- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading.
- Learn to respond to and critique your own and others' works and incorporate the useful feedback of others.

Knowledge of Conventions

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts, from academic to public, and understand that appropriate formats vary given the rhetorical situation.
- Practice appropriate means of documenting your work.
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Knowledge of Digital Writing

- Use digital technology for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts.
- Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources, including scholarly library databases.
- Understand the different strengths and limitations related to both print and electronic composing and texts.

Classroom Policies:

Conferences: This class meets for 150 minutes per week in the classroom, and in addition, you'll meet individually with your instructor four or more times during the semester for a one-on-one writing conference. The purpose of conferences will be to discuss ideas for your assignments, plan revisions for works-in-progress, and refine ideas for research projects. Your instructor will schedule the time and place to meet for your conference. It's your responsibility to arrive on-time and prepared for the conference. *Missing a conference is considered a class absence.* Individual conferences last roughly 15-20 minutes.

Attendance: As FWS is a seminar of 15 students, which relies on in-class writing, group discussion and work shopping, consistent attendance is required. Coming in late or leaving early, if it becomes a pattern, will count as an absence. More than a week's missed classes will lower your final course grade by a full step; and each additional absence will count as another step (a step is from B+ to B, to B-, etc.). More than five absences from class or conference may result in you failing the course. Missing a conference is considered a class absence. If an emergency arises that causes prolonged absence, contact the first-year Dean of your college. See your instructor if you are unsure who that is.

Late Papers: All work is due at by the time and date listed on the course schedule. Any late work will receive a lower grade.

Participation: A percentage of your course grade (10 to 20%) is determined by in-class participation. Your participation grade will include completion of readings, participation in class discussions, bringing appropriate materials to class, including drafts of essays, and providing detailed feedback to your classmates during peer conferences and group workshops.

Plagiarism: According to the BC Policy on Academic Integrity, "Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly

acknowledged.” In this course, the instructor’s job is to teach you the proper methods for citation and attribution of sources. Your job is to ask questions, learn, and not to cheat. Any breaches of academic integrity will result in serious repercussions, such as failing the course. (For the university policy on academic integrity see: www.bc.edu/integrity .) FYI: submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved is viewed as a form of cheating under the university policies.

Campus Resources Available to You:

Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC): Located in 200 O’Neill Library, this is a place where you can go for one-on-one writing tutoring. A tutor won’t “fix” a paper, but can be a great resource if you’re feeling stuck or if you’d just like the feedback of another reader. Most professional writers would dream for such a ready resource, and it’s available to BC students free. To schedule an appointment call **(617) 552-0611**.

Counseling Services: (001 Gasson Hall). If things seem a bit tough for you at any point, or if you would just like someone to talk to—about feeling homesick, having trouble fitting in, or feeling depressed or overwhelmed—there are great people available to listen and help through the University Counseling Services. Call (617) 552-3310 to set up an appointment or stop in any of their offices at Gasson 001. It’s free to all students.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you have a disability and will be **requesting accommodations** for this course, please register with Kathy Duggan: kathleen.duggan@bc.edu, Associate Director, Academic Support Services, The Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or ADHD) or Paulette Durette: paulette.durrett@bc.edu Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advanced notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.