Rhetoric Department Writing Plan

This document outlines expectations associated with Writing Emphasis courses in the rhetoric department, including courses with RHE and COM prefixes. It is intended as a reference for faculty and students seeking to understand the writing-based activities, skills, and learning outcomes they can anticipate practicing, as well as the underlying disciplinary and/or methodological values that support classroom learning.

Values

The disciplines of writing and communication studies position the study and practice of writing as *fundamental* to the knowledge base. Indeed, it is *both* the subject and a primary method of disseminating the subject. Although perhaps impossible to devise a complete list of values underlying "effective writing" in said disciplines, we believe strong writing is grounded in and illustrates the following:

- A process of creation/composition that is responsive to diverse audiences and purposes
- Habits of work and of mind that are honed through the development of a *process*, involving multiple stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing.
- A responsibility to shared ethics regarding truth, representation, documentation, and distribution of ideas or texts
- Sound research though methodologies and genres may vary widely
- An acknowledgement of subjectivity via self-reflexivity
- Prose that is polished and purposeful, even while allowing for variance in voice and/or disruption of conventional norms

Though students will encounter and practice a wide variety of genres and forms of written expression in our courses, we have no way of knowing what situations individuals will face in the future. However, we do know with certainty that our students will, at some point, encounter entirely novel conditions that demand new forms of response. Therefore, Writing Emphasis courses in our department stress the skills, experiences, and values we believe students can draw on and adapt as needed.

Furthermore, our courses strive to foreground the *joy* of writing: that it is not simply a marketable skill or a communicative currency, but is also a pursuit that brings pleasure to the writer, enabling inward reflection or discovery as often as it provides an opportunity to share knowledge, provoke conversation, or advocate a position.

Types of Texts We Create

Scholars and practitioners in our disciplines are prepared to create an infinite number of texts. We strive to give students exposure to as many as possible, grouped under three major headings:

- Scholarly texts
    - Formal, revised research and/or argumentation such as that suited for publication in an academic journal (if abbreviated in length/scope); method and medium may vary widely
- Public-facing texts
    - Typically aimed at audiences of non-specialists, such as reported and editorial journalism, speeches or other oral performances, personal and/or creative essays, and multimedia compositions, which may make use of audio/visual technologies, or be designed for circulation on the web and social media.
- Process texts
    - Informal works that support learning and/or the creation of audience-aware texts, such as: reading responses; summaries and outlines; self-reflections; free-writing; letters, memos, reviews, or other forms of engaging and commenting on the work of one's peers; annotated bibliographies; research journals and other preparatory/reflective materials; etc.

Skills

To learn how to create these texts, students in our courses will engage in

- Scaffolded assignments that focus on individual components or skills required for larger projects
- Discussion and analysis of multiple kinds of texts, whether to learn and practice critical reading and response skills, to deduce guidelines for how to create particular sorts of texts, or to build and connect ideas
- Peer-to-peer, small group, and large group discussion or workshops of in-process writing, which may include written or voiced responses to others' work and ideas
- Conferences with faculty or writing center consultants
- Multiple rounds of revision, with emphasis on prioritizing one's efforts from global concerns to sentence-level refinement of prose
- Primary and secondary research
- Reflection on one's own strengths, weaknesses, growth, and goals

Courses

While all of the courses under the RHE and COM prefixes are likely to include writing of some kind, the following courses carry Writing Emphasis credit for their commitment to assigning *frequent* writing assignments, providing ample *feedback* on those assignments, and taking time to

examine how particular skills, processes, and texts fit into a broader *framework* for learning and participating in our disciplinary communities.

COM-151 Introduction to New Media Studies
COM-157 Introduction to Media Analysis
COM-236 Intercultural Communication
COM-237 Interpersonal Communication
COM-241 Introduction to Multimedia Journalism
COM-332 Health Communication
COM-341 Digital Storytelling
COM-357 Sex, Race, and Gender in the Media
COM-362 U.S. Public Address
COM-381 Research Methods in Communication Studies
COM-394 Directed Studies in Communication
COM-435/7 Special Topics in Relational Communication
COM-444 Independent Study in Communication Studies
COM-445/7 Special Topics in Production
COM-455/7 Special Topics in Media Studies
COM-465/7 Special Topics in Public Discourse
RHE-100 Directed Summer Reading
RHE-105 Reading/Writing Workshop
RHE-135 Writers Colony
RHE-137 Creative Nonfiction & American Culture
RHE-146 Memoir & Culture
RHE-175 Writer's Studio
RHE-225 Journalism & Media Writing Workshop
RHE-255 The Essay
RHE-257 Environmental Rhetoric
RHE-265 Professional Writing
RHE-275 Advanced Writer's Studio
RHE-285 Technical Writing and Information Design
RHE-312 Topics in Composition
RHE-345 Nature Writing
RHE-377 Cultural Studies
RHE-394 Directed Studies in Writing
RHE-425 Topics in Writing and Rhetorical Studies
RHE-415 Advanced Writing Workshop
RHE-444 Independent Study