

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS for Writing-Intensive Courses

In May, 2012, the Hamilton College faculty approved the revised Guidelines for Writing-Intensive (WI) Courses.* According to these guidelines, each WI syllabus must include a short statement describing how the course meets the guidelines.

Key elements to include in your syllabus should be a brief introduction to the goals of the Writing-Intensive program, a statement of how you will implement the specific elements of the guidelines, and a broader discussion of the importance of writing and revision in your course.

The following statement explains to students the goals of the Writing-Intensive program as expressed in the guidelines:

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

What comes next in the syllabus statement depends on such factors as your discipline and the course level. Whatever the specifics of your course, you should describe to students how you will implement the following elements of the Writing-Intensive Guidelines:

- the number and types of writing assignments
- the opportunities students will have to receive individual or small group feedback on drafts from you and/or their peers
- your policy on revisions
- the proportion of the final grade that will be assessed through writing

You may also include a broader discussion about the nature and importance of writing in your discipline. In our experience, detailed consideration of disciplinary writing issues arises more naturally in the articulation of individual writing assignments.

On the following pages are sample syllabi statements by discipline and course level, plus an example of a broader discussion of one instructor's revision policy.

The Writing Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of CAP, plans to create an on-line repository of WI syllabi statements for faculty use. Please consider sharing your statement by forwarding it to a committee member.

This document was prepared by the 2012-13 Writing Advisory Committee: Sharon Rivera (Government, Chair); Ann Silversmith (Physics); Margie Thickstun (English); and Sharon Williams (Writing Center).

*The WI Guidelines are available at the CAP website: www.hamilton.edu/cap/writing-intensive-guidelines-2012-pdf and the Writing Center site: www.hamilton.edu/writing/faculty/writing-materials-for-faculty

Syllabi samples by discipline and course level

Introductory level humanities course

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

In this course, you will write four formal papers and a number of short, informal assignments. Our writing process will include early drafts, feedback on drafts from me and from your peers in class and at the Writing Center, and the opportunity to revise drafts. Sometimes we will discuss general writing concerns in class, and I will be available to discuss your writing during office hours and will provide written feedback on your writing. Your final grade will be based largely (70%) on the major writing assignments. Please refer to specific assignments for details such as due dates, expectations for revision, assignment length, etc.

Upper level humanities course

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

You will write 4 formal papers of expanding lengths. We will meet in tutorials to discuss drafts of the latter two papers. These essays will comprise 65% of your final grade (details below). In addition to benefitting from the tutorial drafting process, you may revise one of the earlier essays for a new grade that will be factored into your average with the initial grade.

You should expect to fulfill smaller assignments on a weekly basis. These assignments will be graded on a 5-point scale. I expect these pieces to be thoughtful, substantive, laced with textual evidence, and stylistically polished. They will be factored into your class participation grade.

Introductory level social science course

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

This course provides you with the opportunity to write frequently, learn how to write different types of papers in the discipline, receive feedback on your writing from me and the tutors at the Writing Center, and thoroughly revise some of your written assignments in response to that feedback. We will also devote some class time to addressing common problems that I observe in the written assignments as well as other concerns students might raise during class. I will provide you with extensive written comments on your papers and will be available to meet with you one-on-one during office hours.

There are four major assignments (details below) that you are expected to complete during the course. These are spaced over the course of the semester and constitute the majority of your

course grade (55%). You are required to have a conference with the Writing Center before submitting one of the four assignments. You are also required to revise your analytical essay. The final grade for the essay will consist of the grade on the original paper (weighted 2/3) and the grade on the revised paper (weighted 1/3). You are strongly encouraged to confer with the tutors at the Writing Center on all of your assignments, even when it is not required.

Upper level science course

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

Unlike most science classes, there will be no exams and no problem sets. You will work on three experimental research projects - mastering the theoretical background, performing the lab work, analyzing results, and presenting your work in the form of scientific journal articles. Papers for the first two experiments will be about 10 pages plus figures, tables, and appendices. The third experiment will be weighted 50% more than the first two, and the paper will be longer – roughly the equivalent of two papers. Your final course grade will be calculated like this:

3 experiments with papers \approx 70% (20, 20, 30 on 3 projects) of course grade

lab notebook, oral presentation, peer review, journal club discussions \approx 30% of grade

While writing, you will be given the same help that is available in the real world. You will write your reports and then revise them after getting feedback from others (your classmates and/or me). We will spend time in class discussing the writing process from beginning to end, and there will be ample opportunity for revision and consultation on each paper. While there will be no final exam, your last report will be due during finals week.

200 level Math course

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

Mathematics is not only about finding correct answers, or about finding methods to find correct answers; like any other discipline, mathematics is also about communicating ideas in writing that is precise, thorough and concise. In particular, this course serves as an introduction to the writing of rigorous mathematical proofs, with special attention to the underlying logical structure of arguments. We will spend a week at the beginning of the semester focusing on specific proof methods, but writing skills and strategies will be discussed in class throughout the semester. I am also happy to help you with your proof-writing skills during office hours.

You will be submitting proofs every other class day, for a total of roughly 20 assignments, counting for 18% of your final grade. Proofs will also comprise roughly half of the points on the three midterm tests, each of which is worth 18% of your final grade, as well as a third of the final exam, which is worth 20% of your final grade. I will grade and give feedback on these proofs

based not only on mathematical correctness, but also on style and grammar. As in all writing intensive courses, you will have opportunities to rewrite some of your work. For homework, rewrites are **by invitation only**, and you can get back up to all the points that were deducted. For the midterm tests, you will be allowed to rewrite **any** proof and get back **up to half the points** that were deducted.

Revision

Helping students learn how to evaluate and revise their work is a critical part of the writing-intensive philosophy. We include here a sample revision policy—one that articulates briefly the benefits that should come from reworking an essay and that outlines a clear and timely process during which to undertake that task.

We highly recommend that you specify in your syllabus how many essays a student may revise during the semester, how many times a student may revise a single piece of writing, and whether students may revise an essay after other essays have intervened (say, decide to revise in November an essay submitted in September). Doing so will avoid inequities—every one has the same explicit opportunities not only to improve an essay but a grade—and will protect you from unreasonable grade-grubbing.

Sample revision policy statement for an essay-based course in any discipline:

The process of re-vising, of seeing your work with new eyes and rethinking your response to a question, constitutes the bulk of what scholars and professional writers do. The process of revision should provide benefits beyond an improved grade. A successful revision will move beyond "fixing" local errors; a successful revision will present a reframed or refined thesis, amplified evidence, and a more nuanced discussion of its topic than was present in the original.

If you choose to revise, you must meet the following conditions:

- 1) Meet with me to discuss your original paper within one week of my returning it to you.
- 2) Submit the revised version within one week of that conference, with the original version—the one with my comments—attached.
- 3) Attach to the revision a paragraph explaining how you have responded to my comments on the original essay.

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