2020 City Tech First-Year Writing Summer Institute Faculty Orientation Guide

Table of Contents

First-Year Sequence Learning Objectives

The audiences for the learning outcomes below are instructors, students, and the larger college and university communities. These outcomes include instances of specialized language that may be unfamiliar to new students but that can be easily understood with the guidance of their instructor.

It is expected that at a minimum, students in ENG 1101 and ENG 1121 will:

1. Read and listen critically and analytically in a variety of genres and rhetorical situations: Identify and evaluate exigencies, purposes, claims, supporting evidence, and underlying assumptions in a variety of texts, genres, and media.

2. Adapt to and compose in a variety of genres: Adapt writing conventions in ways that are suitable to different exigencies and purposes in a variety of contexts, including academic, workplace, and civic audiences. When appropriate, repurpose prior work to new genres, audiences, and media by adjusting delivery, design, tone, organization, and language.

3. Use research as a process of inquiry and engagement with multiple perspectives: Learn to focus on a topic and develop research questions that lead to propositions and claims that can be supported with well-reasoned arguments. Persuasively communicate and repurpose research projects across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media. Demonstrate research skills through attribution and citation gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing both primary and secondary sources. Learn how to use appropriate citation styles depending on disciplinary and situational requirements (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).

4. Use reflection and other metacognitive processes to revise prior assumptions about reading and writing and transfer acquired knowledge into new writing situations. Students write reflections of their own reading and writing process from the beginning and throughout the semester with the intention to transfer their acquired knowledge about genre and composing practices into new writing situations.

5. Demonstrate the social and ethical responsibilities and consequences of writing: Recognize that first-year writing includes academic, workplace, and civic contexts, all of which require careful deliberation concerning the ethical and social ramifications concerning fairness, inclusivity, and respect for diversity. Write and revise for academic and broader, public audiences accordingly.

6. Compose in 21st Century Environments: Learn to choose among the most current and effective delivery methods for different composing situations. Students learn to compose in new media environments, including alphabetic texts, still and moving images, sonic, and mixed media compositions. Use digital media platforms appropriate to audience and purpose.

First-Year Writing Mission Statement and Philosophy

The mission of City Tech's First-Year Writing Program is to provide students with the applied knowledge to successfully assess and adapt to different writing contexts. Students who come through the program learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to apply their knowledge to understand and assess the writing contexts of new situations. To this end, the first-year writing program provides students with ample opportunity to write in a variety of different genres and to compose in different mediums. Students also apply these skills by being able to deduce and speculate what the most advantageous writing styles and mediums are most effective in any one unique writing situation. This emphasis on being able to assess a new situation and adapt to it is consistent with the mission of the College which provides an emphasis on place-based learning, problem-solving skills, and the ability to hone one's own capacity to learn and adapt.

First-Year Writing Sequence

The first year-writing program is an integrated program of critical reading, thinking, and writing. It is comprised of two core courses and several developmental and ESOL courses. English 1101 is required of all students in the college, and English 1121 is required of all students seeking a Bachelor's degree. The first-year sequence also includes a co-requisite composition course that is designed to give students placed into the co-req sections additional support without requiring them to pass a developmental course or high-stakes test.

ENG 1101

English 1101 serves as the introductory composition course, and it aims to develop students' reading, writing, and analytical skills while fostering awareness of their own discursive practices. The course aims to have students critically reflect on their own literacy practices and to attend to them in order to become more nuanced language practitioners. Students begin the course in a fairly conventional way, by writing what are usually called literacy narratives, though these may be broadly defined by individual instructors to include larger concerns such as language diversity, orality, and language and technology. While academic discourse may play a role in the course, the program's primary emphasis is with students' ability to negotiate multiple contexts and writing situations rather than becoming familiar with only academic language.

ENG 1121

English 1121 builds upon the practices and skills students learn in the first semester course by reinforcing the metacognitive and situational writing practices. It probes further into studies concerning discourse communities and multiple genres, working deliberately across multiple genres, voices, and lenses. In 1121, we hope that students situate themselves as writers in the public eye and as members of various communities, and not *only* as students writing for academic situations.It is common to find assignments in this course that include students doing primary research as amateur ethnographers studying the practices and conventions of different workplace, social, and civic communities. It is also common to find students working as language researchers who investigate literacy practices and cultures in different ethnic, border, and subaltern groups. ENG 1121 also explicitly incorporates multimodal writing where students are required to produce writing in mediums other than print.

How the Sequences are Integrated

Both courses emphasize that students should attend to and monitor their own literacy practices and habits throughout the semester. The principle tenets of the course work in the service of students being able to negotiate new writing situations once they leave the first-year sequence. While English 1121 is a more advanced version of the first semester course, they both share certain key principles. These include

- Reflective writing / metacognitive activities
- Daily writing practice
- Appreciation of language diversity
- Understanding the rhetorical situation
- Understanding discourse communities
- Rhetorical genre awareness
- Research as inquiry
- Citation and attribution best practices

Curriculum Overview for Instructors

The Primary Objective

While teaching ENG 1101 and 1121 at City Tech, it is important that faculty always keep in mind that the primary goal of both courses is transfer, that students are able to take the skills they learn and apply them beyond the classroom. There are other essential objectives as outlined in the course SLO's, but they all work in the service of transfer.

At the end of the semester, students should submit approximately 6,000 finished words (significantly revised) in the final portfolio. This is not meant to be punitive, but to indicate that students have the potential to write a great deal more than they think! We learn to write by writing, and we hope to foster that practice in FYW at City Tech.

How to Teach for Transfer?
There are a number of factors that must work together simultaneously over the course of the semester in order to successful transfer in writing to occur.

1.   Frequent practice.
One of the largest factors for students to improve their writing, gain confidence, and learn from their own processes is continual, even daily, writing. Some faculty have students keep daybooks and journals as places where students can continually write. Other faculty have low stakes writing assignments that are due every class meeting to be posted on the OpenLab or on Blackboard. Whatever you do as an instructor, the bottom line is that you should have some running assignment or set of assignments that gets students to explore their writing, to exercise their writing muscles with frequent daily practice.

Twenty minutes a day writing about anything at all is better than pulling an all-nighter to turn in a high stakes paper. In this regard, students need to see themselves as writers, so they are able to reflect upon and think about their own writing, their successes and their struggles. In short, so they are able to reflect upon the relationship they have with writing. At the beginning, it is likely they will have pre-formed ideas about who they are as writers, but that conception should change over the course of the semester. Frequent practice of writing is the critical factor in getting students to see themselves as writers. If they are not producing writing that they can go back, read, and ponder, then they will not be able to form a conception of themselves as writers.

2. Critical Reflection
Frequent practice of writing and reflection go hand-in-hand. In order for students to be able to transfer their writing knowledge, they have to think about how they might be able to transfer it. This means they need to reflect on their writing in a few different ways. Taczak and Robertson discuss reflection at length and build a framework for reflection that should be used continually throughout both ENG 1101 and ENG 1121. These include 1) *Reflective Theory*, where students learn about reflection through readings about reflection. 2) *Reflective Assignments*, where

students reflect formally about the assignments they are working as an integral part of the larger project. 3) *Reflective Activities*, where students complete small stakes assignments that help them think about transfer. One very helpful way to organize this, according to Taczak and Robertson, is for students to look upon writing and writing processes from various directions. For example, one might assign in-class activities asking students to reflect backward (what I did in this writing/ reading/ research/ revision,) inward (what I think/ feel about this literacy task) forward (how I could perform this literacy again task in the future, perhaps in a slightly different situation) and outward (what I've observed from others' processes). The bottom line is that students need to use reflection specifically in ways to think about how the work they are doing will transfer to other contexts.

3.   Writing Contexts/Rhetorical Situations

In order for students to be able to transfer learning, they must become aware of, not only the content, but also the differences in writing situations and the various elements that shapes the discourse. These include the audience to which the writing is being addressed, the discourse/language that is appropriate for that situation, the various different purposes that may motivate the writing (exigence), the medium of delivery that is best for the situation, the current or *historical* limitations or constraints surrounding the discourse as well as the possibilities or affordances the writing opportunity presents. In rhetorical parlance, we generally call this set of factors "the rhetorical situation." In sum, these are:

- The writer's intention
- The audience to whom the piece is written
- The type of language being used
- The medium for the communication
- The constraints presented by the situation
- The opportunities presented by the situation

In order for students to grasp the writing context, they need to learn how to see and read the various elements at play. It is important that students have the opportunity to learn to analyze the rhetorical situation of a given piece of writing, especially early throughout the semester. Rhetorical analysis assignments can be short, 2-3 page assignments asking students to identify and explain each of the elements in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of what is taking place given a piece of writing. Doing several of these over the course of the semester in conjunction with reflection assignments, will help students see that different pieces of writing have different contexts.

While analyzing a piece of writing that has already been written gives students the analytical tools to break a writing situation into its elements, it does not directly help them prepare to write something new. The next step is for students to analyze their own rhetorical situation within which they are placed concerning a piece of writing they are going to write.

When coupled with reflection, being able to identify and explain the rhetorical situation for a given piece of writing is absolutely essential for transfer. When students leave our classes, they need to be able to identify what kind of writing the rhetorical situation calls for and then produce a piece of writing for a new event. If they have never written a biology report before, they will be able to use the tools they learned in their composition class to be able to figure out how to proceed.

4. Discourse Communities and Genre

"Discourse Communitiy" or DC is a term that is frequently used in Rhetoric/Composition studies to articulate what linguists have called Activity Systems for decades. A discourse community is a group of people who share a set of discourses, understood as basic values and assumptions, and ways of communicating about those goals.

Students are already part of discourse communities/activity systems. They have groups of friends. They might play sports, games, go to church, be in band, social media, whatever. Since discourse communities are connected to a sense of identity, starting with the communities to which students already belong is an apparent entry point. In this context, we should keep in mind that transitioning to college is also a major life move, as we well know. There are many studies and anecdotes about the social difficulties students experience as they transition out of high school. Many of them concern issues of friendship, belonging, and adulthood. We lose a lot of students in this transition. City Tech's first-year retention rates hover around 50 percent. The language of discourse communities may, in fact, help students understand their own personal situations better and help them stay in college.

Aside from the DCs that students already belong to, a natural extension is that students are also seeking entrance into new discourse communities that include their other classes, their disciplines, and other communities. We have a wealth of real-life examples of discourse communities everywhere around us, especially in New York. Students have the opportunity to observe workplaces, community centers, and ethnic communities. The list of different groups that they might be able to observe is veritably inexhaustible. Many faculty may be compelled to incorporate an ethnography assignment into their courses where students observe, interview, and take field notes of particular communities. Such assignments may to writing profiles of the genres they produce and the problems they face. Such assignments are common in discourse community and genre projects. Doing so also helps students become more civic-minded, one of the 6 learning outcomes for the course.

Part of learning how a discourse community defines a genre is to understand the expectations that a discourse community has for how language is used, in verbal, visual, or written communication. The best way to learn the culture's nuances is total immersion, like a second language learner. Knowledge is best gained from participating in a discourse community over time, learning the culture, and becoming a member of the group, as an insider. Studies have shown that it is more difficult to learn the nuances of the genre without being a part of the culture. Becoming a part of the discourse is how you learn about the community, where you

learn how they do things. It gives you different hats to try on, lenses to see through, and it helps you move easily from context to context.

Genres and discourse communities are dynamic and changing. Students need to be able to identify how people work together and to be able to understand the genres that different discourse communities produce. The longer they spend with a discourse community, the more they will be able to see how the genres associated with that discourse community change and evolve, both situationally from context to context, but also how they change over time. Discourse communities and genres are inextricably linked together.

5. Pulling it Together: Teaching for Transfer *Explicitly*

By the end of the semester, students will turn in a final portfolio. Students should have had ample opportunities to revise during the course, and so teaching revision and providing opportunity for peer and instructor feedback should be built into each project. Students have also been writing reflective pieces throughout the semester and those reflective pieces should serve them well for preparing their final portfolio. The final portfolio can include smaller papers that may have been part of the scaffolding process for the larger projects, and it can include reflections they have written, but at a minimum it should include their three major projects and a reflective essay. You should shoot for at least 6,000 words.

The reflective essay should incorporate at least three things:

> 1. Students address how they have changed over the course of the semester as readers, writers, and learners. They indicate their strengths, areas to work on, and their growth. It is helpful to frame the assignment asking them to reflect as readers, writers, and learners.

> 2. Students should use specific examples throughout the course in order to substantiate their assertions. They may draw from their papers, what they learned from their peers and instructor, eureka moments in class, discussions with peers, etc. Students can also discuss their physical habits such as where they work and how they work. They can discuss their emotions towards their growth. They can discuss how they solved problems, how they pushed through walls, and so on.

> 3. Students should specifically address the question of transfer. How has the work that you have done prepared you for other writing situations? Students can look backwards (these are the things I did), they can look inwards (this is what I thought and felt about what I did), outwards (this is what my peers did), forwards (this is what I'll do in the future).

Portfolio assignments can be varied and the contents of the portfolio may include smaller and larger assignments. Faculty should feel free to design the portfolio as an assignment, where students are tasked with a challenge. For instance, faculty can choose to create scenarios

where students are asked to respond to a future writing situation in order to describe how they would go about approaching that situation in the future as part of the project, or to write the reflection as an Artist's Statement or a Philosophy of Writing. In the end, once students leave the course, we want them to be thinking and feeling that the course has prepared them to tackle new situations. We also want them to have a sense of accomplishment and well-being.

English 1101 Assignment Sequences

UNIT ONE: Literacy/ Education Narrative:

The assignment should help students describe their own reading processes and writing processes, and the relationship between the two. Instructors may take a slightly different tack and make this more of an education narrative, but one way or another, students should examine their experiences with language, whether in formal or informal situations.
Some important points: 1) The assignment should help students gain a greater sense of their own past literacy experiences and how those experiences have shaped how they envision themselves as writers in the current moment. 2) The assignment should have students reflect on their own schooling and/or educational influences and examine the social and technological issues involved in accessing language fluency. 4) The assignment should have students explore their understandings of the ethnic and cultural diversity of written English as well as the influence of other registers, dialects, and languages.

UNIT TWO: Research as a Process of Inquiry

This unit asks students to engage with research as a process of inquiry, *with a specific focus on genre awareness.* That is, students should emerge from this unit either examining one topic from a multi-genre perspective, or one genre from a multi-topic perspective. The five paragraph theme can be discussed in order to disrupt it, but there's no reason to teach students how to do one. In fact, teaching students how to compose in a particular genre of any kind will not prove very helpful. Rather, students need to be able to investigate a genre on their own. Rather than teaching students to write in a genre (an op ed, a music review, a manifesto, etc.), it is more helpful for students to analyze op eds, music reviews, and manifestos in order to understand how they work and then to write an analysis that explains their operations. As opposed to a traditional "research paper," this assignment focuses on the process of research itself, asking students to look at sources and examine, not only the content of these sources, but also the rhetorical context of those sources (audience, occasion, exigency and so forth.)
In this unit, students should: 1) learn research skills that they will be able to transfer to other learning situations 2) learn to evaluate sources both in their content and context, and 3) begin to put sources from multiple perspectives in conversation with each other, and in conversation with the student's own perspective.

UNIT THREE: Composing in a new Genre

This unit asks students to compose in a genre or genres previously unfamiliar to them (most likely genres introduced in Unit 2.) To do this, they must learn to recognize, identify and label the generic conventions they notice and then begin to use those conventions. The main purpose of this assignment is *transfer.* That is, once students are able to identify and use generic conventions on their own, they will be able to compose in almost any genre.

Unit 4: Portfolio

See pages 9-10 above for the portfolio description.

English 1121 Assignment Sequences:

While 1101 and 1121 are somewhat similar in that they focus on genre awareness, metacognitive awareness and discourse community with the main goal of transfer of writing skills, there are some differences between the two courses. Let us put it this way: the courses rhyme, but 1101 asks students to look inward and examine who they are as writers and 1121 is more focused on asking students to look outward– who are they as *public* writers? With this in mind, while it is not a requirement, many instructors assign at least one group or community-based writing project in 1121.

While it is not a requirement, we suggest a brief, community-building mini-unit (perhaps a week or so long) before getting into the "heavy lifting" of units 1-3, as these are longer, more research-heavy assignments. This might be a short narrative assignment in which the student reflects on their own discourse community, on their own name, on their own speech acts, on their own education– whatever the instructor sees fit.

Unit 1:   Discourse Community Project

According to James Paul Gee, "Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes." As such, membership in a "discourse community" is membership in a group that shares more or less the same ways of saying (or writing), doing, being, valuing and believing. And within these communities, certain forms of art, certain styles of dress, certain ways of speaking, and certain genres of communication carry more sway than others. This unit seeks to examine that sway.

In this unit, **students begin to examine how genres and language function to reach specific discourse communities**, whether they be discourse communities of which the student is a part or not. The student will then produce a finished piece of writing—perhaps a document fit for the discourse community in question, perhaps a rhetorical analysis of a document or documents, perhaps another type of project entirely—one way or the other, **the student should emerge with a better understanding of how language functions to designate membership in the community they are investigating.** They may also investigate whether the artifacts produced by a discourse community relate to societal issues or engage in conversation with other discourses.

Unit 2: Inquiry-Based Research– The Problem.

The purpose of this inquiry-based research is to spark and deepen student curiosity and scholarship. In this unit, students will further their research skills to investigate a problem of interest to them. This may be a problem in their communities, that arises in the literature they're reading, that arises from the discourse community projects or from any number of other places. **The key here is that students begin their research with a question or a hypothesis as opposed to a thesis or an answer.** Their research may lead them to an solution, but it is more likely that the research will lead them *closer* to a solution, or to a different, deeper question– and that's fine!

Instructors can and should scaffold the problem-finding process, narrowing it down to a family of topics or otherwise helping students choose a place to begin, but instructors should not prescribe topics to students wholesale. Students will be expected to a variety of online

resources and will also have the possibility of conducting interviews or other observation based research. Research will require that students use appropriate attribution practices including gathering and evaluating of multiple sources, both primary and secondary sources. Students will be asked to synthesize a variety of ideas and sources while they pursue their research goals and questions. Research assignments can be individual projects or group projects.

Unit 3: Repurposing– with Persuasion!

This assignment asks students to re-think, or re-envision, one of the assignments they have written previously in the semester, presenting it in a totally new genre, perhaps changing modes: for example, a revision that goes from a written essay to an audio podcast, website, graphic, video essay or rap album and in this translation, making an argument to their new audience. **This assignment builds on the generic, rhetorical and audience awareness that students have worked on all semester long, asking them to consider what discourse community they are trying to reach and, not only what diction, but also what mode of delivery would be best for persuading that discourse community of their message.** This "translation" is key to transfer, one of the core learning outcomes of this course. If students can take a message and transform it for different audiences and media, then they are well on their way to being able to transfer writing skills across fields, disciplines and discourse communities.

 Along with the multimodal piece itself, students should write a metacognitive reflective essay explaining their process, their initial goals, and how well they feel they were able to reach those goals.

Unit 4: Final Portfolio:

See pages 9-10 above for the portfolio description.

Note: Syllabus template and course grid are forthcoming.