

Preface

Welcome to the Expository Writing Program and to your composition course! Whether you are taking English 104/105, English 111, English 121, or English 131, we hope the course will help you not only to fulfill the University of Washington's composition ("C") requirement but also to continue to develop the critical reading, research, and writing skills that will allow you to succeed as a writer at the UW and beyond.

In offering a gateway to academic reading, research, and writing at the University of Washington, Expository Writing Program (EWP) courses are designed around a set of shared learning outcomes, which are printed immediately following this Preface. These outcomes articulate the need for students to develop and practice the skills and habits that are foundational to academic writing and be able to adapt these skills and habits for the varied demands of university-wide writing. In what follows, we will first explain what these outcomes mean for you as a student in this course, and we will then describe how this book is designed to support you in meeting these outcomes.

Research in writing development has demonstrated that writing is not a skill that is mastered once and for all. Instead, successful writers draw on and adapt writing strategies to participate meaningfully and effectively within various contexts. Because writing is intimately connected to how people in different contexts inquire, make meaning, get things done, and relate to one another, in order to write effectively, writers need to consider strategies that are appropriate to these contexts. For example, they need to consider what kinds of writing (genres) to use, how to organize their writing, what

counts as evidence and how to present that evidence, what word choices to make, and so on. In the same way, students within a university are often called on to adapt their writing for different disciplines, learning to write effectively in history, biology, business, political science, sociology, geography, chemistry, and so on, as they learn the conventions, expectations, and methods of inquiry of their major fields of study.

How can this composition course prepare you to write effectively for these different contexts? As the outcomes indicate, this course aims to help you develop general academic writing skills and habits at the same time as it helps you develop strategies for understanding and adapting these skills and habits to different writing contexts.

Although academic writing is varied and discipline specific, it does possess foundational features that can be identified, generalized, and learned. Among the hallmarks of academic writing are the ability to read and analyze complex texts critically, to apply methods and concepts for particular purposes, to use research to generate ideas as well as support them, and to make arguments based in claims, evidence, and analysis. Successful academic writers also recognize writing as a process of learning, and they make effective use of revision, peer review, and editing. This course will enable you to develop and practice these general skills and habits, as outlined in outcomes 2, 3, and 4. But because we want you to be able to build on and apply these skills and habits as you encounter different writing contexts and tasks throughout and beyond your college career, the course will also allow you to develop an awareness of the strategies that writers use in different writing contexts as articulated in outcome 1, so that you can effectively situate your writing skills and habits in these contexts.

Situating Inquiry: An Introduction to Reading, Research, and Writing at the University of Washington is designed to support you in meeting these course outcomes. It is meant to help you develop and situate writing skills and habits that you can build on throughout your time at the UW and beyond, as you encounter and participate in different contexts of inquiry. To that end, the book is divided into an Introduction and six parts, which provide strategies to guide you from understanding writing contexts, or “rhetorical situations” (Introduction), to reading texts critically (Part 1), to situating your writing within different contexts (Part 2), to conducting research as a way to generate and support your inquiry (Part 3), to developing and structuring analysis and arguments (Part 4), to practicing strategies for revising and editing your writing (Part 5). Part 6 contains a wide range of readings that offer both methods and objects for inquiry. These six parts, which describe writing as a way of engaging and working through ideas, reflect the trajectory of inquiry that is suggested in the book’s title.

In the Introduction, you are invited to understand the nature of rhetorical situations and how these shape the choices writers make. Then, in Part 1, you will have an opportunity to develop rhetorical reading skills, which call on you to pay attention not only to what a text is saying but also to *how* and *why* it is saying it—in short, to critically examine the choices that the writer of a text has made and the effects these choices have on readers. Part 2 builds on the critical reading strategies from Part 1, applying them to the reading of situations. The goal of this part is to help you turn your reading *of* different situations into writing *in* different situations, so that once you have developed an understanding of

your writing situation, you will be provided with writing strategies for acting in that situation. Part 3 introduces strategies for conducting both library-based secondary research and field-based primary research that are meant to help you explore a line of inquiry. Part 4 presents strategies for using inquiry to generate academic writing, focusing on claims, evidence, analysis, and argument. Part 5 offers strategies for helping you revise and edit your writing.

Part 6 of the book includes readings on a variety of topics, written in different contexts, for different audiences, in different genres, using different media (print, visual, electronic, multimedia). Many of the readings are academic in nature, resembling the kinds of texts you will encounter as a student at the UW. Others--such as ads, editorials, speeches, cartoons, public art, photographs, magazine articles, and poems--are directed at and produced for different audiences. And other documents are overtly political, like the U.S. Constitution, the Academic Bill of Rights, Supreme Court decisions, and the Declaration of the Rights of Women. Some of the readings can be used as *methods*, meaning they can provide techniques for analyzing a concept, idea, phenomenon, and the like. Some of the readings can be used as *objects*, meaning they can be analyzed for how they function, what they do, and so on. And some of the readings can serve both purposes. Whether these texts are used as models for your own work, objects of analysis, or conceptual lenses for inquiry, they provide a range of work that will allow you to explore how arguments take different forms for different purposes in different genres and media. The readings, together with the tools for inquiry presented in Parts 1-5, should enable you to fulfill the outcome goals for your composition course as well as your own personal

writing goals by helping you situate your inquiry within the different contexts you will encounter at the University of Washington and beyond.