

# WRIT 1122 and 1133 Requirements at the University of Denver

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## WRIT 1122: Academic Writing

WRIT 1122 teaches strategies that are vital in writing for well-educated readers, primarily in situations that require you to present and justify positions. The course teaches rhetorical analysis and practices, the effective use of readings and source materials, and techniques for generating, revising, and editing texts produced to meet specific situations. WRIT 1122 provides sustained practice in writing, with systematic instructor feedback, that results in at least four finished and polished papers, totaling some 20-25 pages by quarter's end. Students will additionally complete several informal or drafting exercises.

### Goals of WRIT 1122

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of the concept "rhetorical situation," through the abilities both to analyze and to write effectively in different kinds of situations.
2. Demonstrate proficiency with basic elements of rhetorical analysis (such as logos, ethos, and pathos) in a range of texts, and the application of that facility in their own writing.
3. Demonstrate the ability to produce writing that effectively provides evidence and reasoning for assertions, for audiences of educated readers.
4. Demonstrate the ability effectively to incorporate written sources into their own writing and to document those materials.
5. Demonstrate the ability to use feedback to revise their own writing and the ability to provide useful feedback to others.
6. Demonstrate the ability to edit and proofread their writing.

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## WRIT 1133: Writing and Research

WRIT 1133 teaches rhetorical strategies needed for successful research-based writing in diverse academic and nonacademic situations. Students will apply the principles and practices introduced in WRIT 1122 to write in at least two broad academic research traditions, including interpretive (the analysis of texts or artifacts), qualitative (analyses based on observations or interviews), or quantitative (analyses based on measurement).

### In addition to continuing to master the goals of WRIT 1122, students will

1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of academic research traditions (for example, text-based/interpretive; measurement-based/empirical; and observational/qualitative) through effectively writing in at least two of those traditions.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of rhetorical/conventional differences among various academic disciplines or groups of disciplines.
3. Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences, through both analysis and performance.
4. Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.

*Elaboration of the Goals for WRIT 1133: Notes to faculty.*

**1. Demonstrate practical knowledge of academic research traditions (for example, text-based/interpretive; measurement-based/empirical; and observational/qualitative) through effectively writing in at least two of those traditions.** Research is central to WRIT 1133, but research understood broadly. There is a close relationship between rhetoric and epistemology, the ways that knowledge is made in different traditions, including such matters as what counts as evidence and what form an argument must take. The University houses several research traditions. One is reading-based research, in which the writer assembles a set of written texts and, through complexly intertwined practices of interpretation, analysis, and synthesis, develops an argument. For most students, in most writing courses, this is what research means. It is the primary method of the humanities, and it is a component of most other disciplines. However, it is hardly the only research tradition that matters in the university. A related tradition is interpretive, in which the artifacts aren't print texts but, rather, art or music, images, architecture, and the whole gamut of popular culture artifacts. A third tradition is measurement-based research, in which the writer uses a systematic procedure to

generate a quantitative representation of a phenomenon, then makes an argument based on that representation. The phenomena are physical in the natural sciences, and the measures come through instruments such as scales or rulers or dosimeters or spectrometers or so on. The phenomena are social or psychological in the social sciences, and the measures come through instruments such as surveys. Another research tradition is qualitative research, in which the writer uses systematic observational or first-hand inquiry strategies to generate descriptions of phenomena, then interpret those descriptions to support arguments. Methods include interview and direct observation.

**2. Demonstrate an understanding of rhetorical/conventional differences among various academic disciplines or groups of disciplines.** The emphasis of this goal is “understanding of differences” and not “mastery of specific disciplines.” The latter, of course, would be impractical for WRIT 1133 and is properly the responsibility of individual departments and disciplines. The goal is not inoculation to perform well in the writing style of many disciplines but, rather, the ability to analyze and learn to emulate that disciplinary discourse, with the help of future teachers of it, in future courses. “Academic discourse” is hardly a unified entity, and students benefit from knowing that the concept of “rhetorical situations” learned in 1122 applies within the academy as well as without. Clearly this goal maps closely against goal one. That is, the adherence to certain epistemologies in certain disciplines often manifests itself in patterns of organization and development, citation practices (and the values underlying them), the ethos of writers, and so on. However, a research method isn’t manifested only in disciplinary discourses. A lot of popular writing uses interview or observation, for example, or gathering and interpreting artifacts (think of essays on film genres). One can “demonstrate an understanding” both through analysis and through performance, and teachers will likely find both useful in teaching this goal. As with any of these goals, teachers may elect to have students emulate features of disciplinary disciplines, writing short papers or parts of papers or doing exercises with voice and style, rather than only doing fully-fledged papers.

**3. Demonstrate practical knowledge of rhetorical differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences, through both analysis and performance.** There are significant differences between writing for academic audiences and writing for popular audiences. The most obvious is a depth of knowledge or expertise between the two groups of readers. However, another important difference is that academic audiences are usually obliged to read texts to keep up with their professions, while popular audiences elect to read—or not read—texts on various subjects; this has implications for style and manner of presentation, perhaps even the design of the texts. Students in 1133 should recognize and understand the differences between writing to an audience of disciplinary experts reading for professional reasons and writing to an audience of nonexperts reading for civic or aesthetic reasons. One way to develop that knowledge experientially is to have students “translate” pieces written for one type of audience into pieces intended for the other.

**4. Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.** While multiple kinds of research are important in 1133, writing with reading is vital. The added emphasis in 1133 (over 1122) is on “finding.” Students should learn to use academic databases and develop strategies for finding information for specific rhetorical needs. Research needs to be understood as a purposeful act, with sources sought and used to address specific writing needs rather than as a hollow formal act of gathering and dumping.

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## Additional features of both courses

1. Focuses on the production of student texts.
2. Includes specific instruction in rhetorical and critical analysis.
3. Includes specific instruction and practice in using rhetorical strategies.
4. Emphasizes writing for well-educated audiences, generally for public/civic purposes.
5. Substantially uses process pedagogies, including regular attention to invention, production, revision, and delivery.
6. Includes a substantial reading component.
7. Teaches basic techniques for incorporating and documenting sources.
8. Teaches students editing and proofreading strategies to produce texts that meet the grammatical, usage, and conventional expectations of readers.
9. Requires students to produce from 6000 to 8000 revised and polished words (20-25 pages), in at least four texts.
10. Accomplishes the course goals through a well-conceived sequence of activities and assignments.
11. Requires a portfolio at the end, for assessment purposes.

## *Elaboration of the features listed above*

### **1. Focuses on the production of student texts.**

The feature that most distinguishes writing courses from, say, other courses that may include even substantial writing assignments is the former's sustained emphasis on student writing. The student's texts are the primary focus of the course, receiving as much respect as expert texts—and more time and attention. This focus is manifested by several practices, including explicit instruction on strategies and processes; the sharing of student writing with others in the course and beyond; peer workshops; writing center consultations; individual conferences with the professor, and so on. While reading plays a strong role in the course, readings serve the development of student writing and critical/analytical abilities. Students will have an opportunity to write for different purposes and audiences.

### **2. Includes specific instruction in rhetorical and critical analysis.**

Rhetorical and critical analysis helps students become more astute readers, analysts, and critics of published texts, focusing on how and why writers achieve effects on readers. Students in WRIT 1122 should learn how texts vary in both form and content according to their intended audiences, their purposes, and the contexts in which they were written. Students will learn to read a text closely, and write about how it functions, and not just what it contains. They will also learn to evaluate claims, evidence, reasoning strategies, and ethical and emotional appeals as well as logical.

WRIT 1122 focuses on basic strategies for rhetorical and critical analysis, primarily in texts written for educated public audiences. The next course, WRIT 1133, emphasizes how these skills function within the contexts of academic disciplinary traditions, including in relation to more popular writings about academic knowledge.

### **3. Includes specific instruction and practice in using rhetorical strategies.**

The emphasis on using rhetorical strategies complements instruction in rhetorical and critical analysis. The shift in emphasis is from *analyzing* what others have done, with what effect, and why, to *using* those strategies in students' own writings. Writers face a host of decisions as they plan, organize, and compose texts. Among other things, they must persuade audiences situated within a certain historical time and cultural place, limited by certain constraints: time, money, logistics, etc. Vital to navigating this maze of choices is understanding the particulars of a given rhetorical situation. What does my audience know or believe, and what implications does that have for my writing? What evidence and reasoning will be most effective? What tone should I adopt, and how should I present myself? What organizational strategies are most effective in this situation? How do I best deal with points of view different from my own?

### **4. Emphasizes writing for well-educated audiences, generally for public/civic purposes.**

In the finite space of a single course, it's clearly impossible to give students practice in all types of writing and writing situations they will need to master. For example, writing to people with little education who seldom read may invoke strategies significantly different from writing to college graduates who subscribed *Wired* or *Harpers*. Similarly, there are important differences between writing in professional/workplace situations, writing for personal development and pleasure, writing in specific academic disciplines, and writing on subject matters, issues, and ideas for a broad reading public. This last characterizes writing for civic purposes, that is, writing that seeks to inform and influence thought and decision making in various public spheres.

### **5. Substantially uses process pedagogies, including regular attention to invention, production, revision, and delivery.**

Good writing does not occur magically. Process pedagogies recognize that strong writing skills develop over time through practice. Rather than focus solely on the finished product (e.g. the final exam; the one-time graded paper; the longer research paper), teachers using process pedagogies guide students through various aspects of writing, from invention to drafting to revision. A key feature of such instruction is providing feedback to students. This may take the form of small group feedback sessions, teacher-student conferences, comments on drafts, and in-class workshops.

- **Invention** is the act of generating ideas and content or discovering new directions that writing might take. Invention strategies may include systematic inquiry heuristics, free-writing, journaling, preliminary research, outlining, questioning, along with classroom collaboration and discussion. Through invention, students discover both what they already know about their subject and what they need to know.
- **Drafting** is the fundamental process of getting words down on the page or screen in a productive order informed by purpose, audience, and context when producing any document.

- **Revision** involves considering the fit between a developing text and the rhetorical situation for which it's being produced. Revision attends to substantive issues, including overall structure, argument and logic, purpose, and uses of evidence. Based on their self analysis and feedback from instructors and peers, students doing revision work make additions, subtractions, transpositions, and substitutions to their texts, at levels ranging from sentence to paragraphs to ideas and sequences.
- **Editing** means attending to surface-level features of texts to make them conform to readers' expectations of style, grammar and usage, manuscript conventions, and so on. Editing involves both proofreading and focusing on textual features as small as words, phrases, and sentences to promote not only correctness but also precision and rhetorical effectiveness. See #8, below.

#### 6. Includes a substantial reading component.

Reading in WRIT 1122 is important both for practice in rhetorical analysis and for providing content that students write about, with, through, and against. Through active reading, students come into conversation with texts by others, analyzing received positions and developing their own. Students need to be able to summarize readings, interpret their meanings and implications, analyze their rhetorical strategies, relate them to other texts about the same subject matter, and explain their limitations or inadequacies.

To practice these skills, students in WRIT 1122 may read a text or set of related texts; discuss them (unpacking the meanings, debate the terms used, arriving at an interpretation); write in response; synthesize multiple readings; produce critiques or reviews; and use summary, paraphrase, or quotation to incorporate ideas into their own texts. Reading of student writing in the course is also important, using all the strategies one might use for published writing.

#### 7. Teaches basic techniques for incorporating and documenting sources.

In WRIT 1122, students will begin to develop an awareness of, and comfort with using, sources in their writing. The course will focus primarily on **working with sources, rather than finding them**, and concentrate on dealing effectively with a limited number of sources, rather than an extensive list of them. This will include learning to summarize accurately, paraphrase key ideas, and quote or cite specific ideas or information concisely, accurately, and in ways that blend source materials effectively with their own writing.

Students will consider such questions as, Why draw on sources? What types of sources will best support particular arguments or rhetorical situations? How do writers evaluate sources, attending to such things as the author's credentials and quality of reasoning and evidence, the timeliness of the research, its intended readership, and so on?

Students will gain basic experience in documenting sources appropriately according to MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style. The goal is not to have students master all conventions of all style manuals but to teach them how to use style manuals and to understand the vital importance of following conventions to document sources aptly

#### 8. Teaches students editing and proofreading strategies to produce texts that meet the grammatical, usage, and conventional expectations of readers.

Students should learn that careful attention to editing and proofreading strengthens their ability to be taken seriously by readers. At the same time, students learn that the absence of sentence-level errors does not necessarily mean that the writing is effective.

Students should acquire strategies for editing and proofreading in the context of their own writing, rather than through generalized grammar exercises. Based on need, instructors may devote small amounts of class time to particular issues in style, or to grammar, punctuation, and usage errors.

**Editing** is understood as having both an emphasis on **style** (e.g., word choice, diction, emphasis, transition, gracefulness) and on **managing errors in grammar, punctuation, and usage**.

- *Editing for style:* As time allows, concepts about editing as stylistic craft are introduced, with reference to course readings for positive models. Though students may not be ready for more sophisticated stylistic editing, they will benefit from introductory instruction on word choice, sentence structure, and other stylistic elements that can enhance meaning.
- *Editing as error management:* In WRIT 1122, students learn to make distinctions within a continuum of concerns—between higher order and lower order writing errors. They learn to identify their own patterns of error and develop a variety of strategies for addressing and correcting these patterns.

Students develop long-term skills for self-diagnosis of error and successful use of available resources, including use of a handbook and familiarity with the Writing Center.

**Proofreading** is a last step to ensure that the text is as free as possible from errors or unintentional elements. Students learn strategies for catching typographical errors, inconsistencies in spelling, and other purely surface-level mistakes that irritate readers and affect the author's ethos. Because research indicates the limited efficacy of marking all errors in a piece of writing as a means of teaching mechanical proficiency, instructor marking and evaluation of editing and proofreading errors is constructive and instructive, rather than punitive. Student writing is not expected to be error-free by the end of WRIT 1122, but by the end of the course, students should be able to distinguish different categories of error, be able to identify their individual error patterns, should have developed strategies for addressing these, and should be aware of some of the resources available to them for strengthening their writing at the levels of style, grammar, usage, and punctuation.

**9. Requires students to produce from 6000 to 8000 revised and polished words (20-25 pages), in at least four texts.**

Just as musicians and athletes learn by practicing—by “doing” rather than by “studying about”—so do writers develop by writing. Students in WRIT 1122 can generally expect many writing assignments, some of them single-drafted, even informal exercises, others more formal papers multiply drafted and revised. As a four-credit course, WRIT 1122 will have students complete 8 to 12 hours of out-of-class work each week, the bulk of it in their own writing. Students will generally write several thousand words, in as few as four to as many as dozens of individual writing assignments. Of the total volume produced, students will complete a least four “finished and polished” pieces, together totaling 6000-8000 words. By “finished and polished,” we mean writing that is thoroughly revised and carefully edited, usually based on responses from the instructor (and peers), and represents the student's best work in given rhetorical situations.

**10. Accomplishes the course goals through a well-conceived sequence of activities and assignments.**

A commitment to the *process* of writing informs the design of WRIT 1122. The course provides a careful sequence of reading and writing assignments designed to build student skills and abilities. Sequences of writing activities, for example, will equip students with the rhetorical skills to use in future or longer assignments. The cumulative sequence of assignments means that students continually draw upon what they have learned already in order to push themselves even further. The goal is not only to provide students with a flexible repertoire of writing tactics but to teach them how to combine those tactics into coherent, purposeful, and context-specific strategies.

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