

Critical Thinking and Writing 1 and 2
Description and Objectives
DRAFT
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“In this sequence, students will engage in an intensive practice of writing as inquiry, reflection, and communication. Students will develop their thinking and writing through substantive revision as they work with faculty who model ways of reading, writing, and research.”

--*Proposal for the Santa Clara University Core Curriculum*, Core Curriculum Revision Committee, 2007, p. 9.

Overall Learning Goals

Learning goals are broad statements about the content, level of knowledge, skill and values that faculty expect students to possess upon completion of a program of study, of which the CTW sequence is an important part. The learning goals for the CTW sequence, which have been delineated in the Core Curriculum document, are threefold:

- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments. Students experience writing and other critical thinking processes as a way to learn.

By understanding critical thinking and writing as a reflexive process students become intentional learners who develop self-awareness about the reasons for study and “adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lives” (*Greater Expectations* xi).

- **Complexity:** An approach to understanding the world that appreciates ambiguity and nuance as well as clarity and precision.

Critical thinking and writing requires awareness of historical, cultural, and social contexts and further requires sensitivity to cultural difference.

- **Communication:** Interacting effectively with different audiences, especially through writing, speech, and second language.

Critical thinking and writing require students to contextualize their own ideas and the ideas of others through rhetorical analysis, logical reasoning, and information literacy.

Student Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are specific statements of the content, level of knowledge, skills, and values that faculty expect students to possess upon the completion of the CTW sequence. They are the minimum and mandatory objectives.

At the end of CTW 1, students will

- Read and write with a critical point of view that displays depth of thought and is mindful of the rhetorical situation (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity, Communication)
- Write essays that contain well-supported, arguable theses and that demonstrate personal engagement and clear purpose (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Communication; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)
- Reflect on and/or analyze the rhetorical differences, both constraints and possibilities, of different modes of presentation (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)
- Reflect on the writing process as a mode of thinking and learning that can be generalized across a range of writing and thinking tasks (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)

At the end of CTW 2, students will

- Read and write with a critical point of view that demonstrates greater depth of thought and a more thorough understanding of the rhetorical situation than in CTW 1 (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity, Communication)
- Write research-based essays that contain well-supported arguable theses and that demonstrate personal engagement and clear purpose (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity, Communication; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)
- Independently and deliberately locate, select, and appropriately use and cite evidence that is ample, credible, and smoothly integrated into an intellectually honest argument (Learning Goals: Complexity, Communication; Meta-Goal: Information Literacy)
- Analyze the rhetorical differences, both constraints and possibilities, of different modes of presentation (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)
- Reflect more deeply than in CTW 1 upon the writing process as a mode of thinking and learning that can be generalized across a range of writing and thinking tasks (Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Complexity; Meta-Goal: Intentional Learning)

Course Descriptions

Critical Thinking and Writing 1 and 2 is a two-course sequence that enrolls 17 students per course. Normally, students enrolled in the first course of the sequence will be enrolled in the second course. Sequences may be offered by one instructor or by two instructors who coordinate their courses. Faculty members are encouraged to develop courses on themes related to the Residential Learning Communities.

CTW 1 introduces students to academic writing. It is a course in critical reading and writing with an emphasis on understanding and developing clear, effective sentences and logical, organized compositions. By the end of the course students will understand how to create and support an arguable thesis. Analytical skills developed will include analysis of rhetorical situations, as well as the ability to read critically rather than compliantly.

CTW 2 continues to develop the skills and habits of mind begun in CTW 1 with a rhetorical focus on writing as a tool for communication in a variety of media and contexts. Emphasis is on argument and logical reasoning; students will gain practice supporting arguments with research by finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources in their own writing. Students will be invited to consider the rhetorical differences between different media, modes and texts, and will be introduced to concepts of information literacy.

Assumptions

- To engage students with writing and to avoid plagiarism, topics should grow out of the course readings and should be based at least in part on texts read in the course and supplemented by students' research using the library and other appropriate sources.
- In order to meet the learning goals specified in the new core curriculum, CTW 1 and 2 should enroll no more than 17 students. The National Council of Teachers of English, in its "Statement on Class Size and Teacher Workload: College," says,

No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.

Minimum Standards

CTW 1:

- Students will compose a minimum of 20 pages of original work, not including revisions
- At least two essays will be a minimum of 5-6 pages in length to allow students to explore effective and rich development of their topics
- Students will work on critical reading skills with a variety of complex texts
- Students will draw on feedback from professor and peers during the writing process and then substantially revise their own writing
- Students will learn to use a reputable online or print handbook

CTW 2:

- Students will compose a minimum of 20 pages of original work, not including revisions
- At least two essays, one of which will be a minimum of 8-10 pages in length to allow students practice organizing and developing a longer essay
- At least one essay will be an academic, research-based argument that incorporates multiple sources
- Students will draw on feedback from professor and peers during the writing process and then substantially revise their own writing
- Students will gain some experience with reading, evaluating, and understanding visual and/or new media

Sources

“English 1 and 2 Student Learning Outcomes,” December, 2004.

“Final Report: Task Force on English 1 & 2” (DRAFT), Sherry Booth, et al. Department of English, May 2006.

“Glossary of Assessment Terms.” Carol Giancarlo Gittens. 2007.

Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College, National Panel Report. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002.

“Program in Writing and Literacy Studies: Proposal” (DRAFT), Jennifer Trainor, et al., 2006.

Proposal for the Santa Clara University Core Curriculum, Core Curriculum Revision Committee, 2007.

“Santa Clara University Core Curriculum: The Third Writing Requirement,” Sept. 2001.