

RHETORIC 200
GUIDELINES
SPRING 2019

INTRODUCTION

Hampden-Sydney College established the writing proficiency requirement to ensure that students continue to hone their writing skills after the freshman year. Each student must pass the proficiency requirement to be graduated from the College. Rhetoric 200: Proficiency Tutorial was established for students who have reached the senior year (89 credit hours) without having passed the Rhetoric Proficiency Exam, the primary means by which students demonstrate that they are proficient writers. But because some students have difficulty with timed examinations and may not perform well in that setting, another option for demonstrating proficiency exists: this tutorial course in which students write and revise several essays during the span of a semester.

COURSE CONTENT

In Rhetoric 200, you must write three essays of six to eight pages each to demonstrate that you can satisfy the College's writing proficiency requirement. To be deemed a proficient writer at Hampden-Sydney College, you must construct well-reasoned, meaningful, logically organized arguments that are supported with sufficient evidence. Furthermore, you must express your ideas in prose that meets the expectations of your readers, prose that conveys your ideas clearly. Rhetoric 200 is designed to help you meet these goals.

In consultation with the instructor, you will devise the topics for these essays, though you are encouraged to explore issues which you are studying or have recently studied in courses you find interesting. While you may draw on materials from your courses, the essays you produce for Rhetoric 200 should be aimed at a general audience. In other words, you should assume that your readers are not familiar with your subject matter, so you should write for an intelligent but not specialized audience. All of your essays must be argumentative or analytical in nature; at least two must be researched as well. *You should research all three essays if the topics you choose require research to be persuasive.* Essays analyzing primary sources fulfill the research requirement as do arguments supported by secondary sources. Essays that do not require primary or secondary source material must still address significant topics and must be supported with examples and evidence that make the argument persuasive.

In Rhetoric 200 you must meet with the instructor weekly. During tutorial sessions, you will discuss drafts and work on revisions with the instructor. Only essays that have been written using this process may be submitted for grading. Your instructor will establish a schedule for submitting your essays to the panel of readers (for more information, see Appendix A: Grading Procedures).

Note: Although you may draw on material studied in other courses, in Rhetoric 200 you may not submit essays that you have written for other courses, and you may not submit essays written for Rhetoric 200 as work for other courses. Check item # 3 under Plagiarism below.

WRITING CENTER

In addition to working one-to-one with your instructor, you can also seek help on your essays from Writing Center tutors. The Writing Center is located in the basement of Morton Hall. Tutors there will assist you with an essay at any stage of the writing process. They can help you generate ideas, give you feedback on the clarity of a draft, help you refine your thesis or organize your thoughts, let you know where they think you need more support for your argument, and work with you on sentence structure and grammar.

Six Dell computers as well as a laser printer are available for your use in the Center; you can also bring your own laptop and work in the Center, since it is a “WiFi Hotspot.” Tutoring is available in the Writing Center Sundays from 6:00 p.m. to midnight and Mondays-Thursdays, 1:30 p.m. to midnight.

PLAGIARISM and THE HONOR CODE

1. Definition

The official College statement on plagiarism is found in *The Key*. One possible consequence of plagiarism is expulsion from the college. The following comments, drawn from the *MLA Handbook* 8th ed. (2016), supplement that basic statement:

Plagiarism is presenting another person's ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one's own. [...]

Plagiarism can take a number of forms, including buying papers from a service on the Internet, reusing work done by another student, and copying text from published sources without giving credit to those who produced the sources. All forms of plagiarism have in common the misrepresentation of work not done by the writer as the writer's own. [...]

Even borrowing just a few words from an author without clearly indicating that you did so constitutes plagiarism. Moreover, you can plagiarize unintentionally; in hastily taken notes, it is easy to mistake a phrase copied from a source as your original thought and then to use it without crediting the source. [...]

It's important to note that you need not copy an author's words to be guilty of plagiarism; if you paraphrase someone's ideas or arguments without giving credit for their origin, you have committed plagiarism. (7-9)

2. Avoiding plagiarism

What makes plagiarism inexcusable is that it is dishonest. You can avoid plagiarizing if you are careful always to note the source of your information for print and on-line materials when you conduct your research, and if you practice simple honesty. As you learn to use primary and secondary sources in composing your essays, follow three simple rules:

- 1) Get specific instructions about citation from the professor, follow them exactly, and ask whenever you are uncertain.
- 2) When in doubt, always acknowledge the source.
- 3) Follow the guidelines in the *MLA Handbook* or other appropriate style sheet or manual (see also pp. 577—583 of *The Bedford Handbook* 9th edition). The documentation style you should use will depend upon the discipline in which you are writing the essay. Consult with the instructor about which form would be the most appropriate for each essay, though generally you are allowed to use the form most familiar to you.

Remember that any on-line materials you use to gather information for a paper are also governed by rules about plagiarism, so you need to learn to cite electronic sources as well as printed and other sources.

3. Documentation Form and Essay Format

The Rhetoric Program instructs you in the use of the new MLA (2016) style of documentation, a style that requires that writers cite their sources in parenthetical acknowledgments in their texts. See *The Bedford Handbook*, pp. 598—610; 611—661. Pages 613—662 in *The Bedford Handbook* provide guidelines for constructing entries in a “Works Cited” list. Since other styles of documentation exist, professors in various disciplines may require you to use some other documentation style—APA or Turabian, for example. You should ask professors about requirements for documentation form.

Every essay should have an appropriate title, and essays that use information from any source should include a “Works Cited” list. On pages 662—673 of *The Bedford Handbook*, you will find an explanation of the MLA manuscript format that your professor may require that you use as a model for your essays.

4. Other Honor Code Matters

All Honor Code rules apply in this course. You should write out the Honor Code pledge and sign it on the title page of **one** of the three copies of every essay you submit for grading.

Professors assume that any paper submitted by a student for any course was prepared by that student for that specific class. **You may not turn in a single paper for two or more different courses unless each professor involved has authorized you to do so in advance. It is considered a violation of the College’s Honor Code to double-submit a paper without permission from both instructors. Furthermore, you may not hand in any paper previously submitted at this or any other school without obtaining the permission of the current professor in advance.**

You must edit your own work. Corrections made by someone else constitute a violation of the Honor Code. You are permitted to use spell checks and editing programs for Rhetoric 200 essays; using these tools does not violate the Honor Code.

Finally, you should include the following pledge at the end of each paper you write for this class (note that this pledge differs slightly from the regular College pledge):

On my honor I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment, nor am I aware of any violation of the Honor Code that I shall not immediately report. I have given full credit, in the text or in endnotes or footnotes, for any ideas or wording drawn from someone else, and I have appended a Works Cited list that gives information about the sources I used.

(Signature)

Appendix A: Grading Procedures

Demonstrating proficiency:

You must demonstrate proficiency in writing in order to be graduated from the College. You may do so by earning passing grades on all three of your essays in Rhetoric 200; you will also satisfy the Rhetoric requirement if you pass the regular Proficiency Exam in the semester you are enrolled in Rhetoric 200. In this case, you do not need to write the third essay for the course (the due date for the final essay normally falls after the proficiency exam administration). You are strongly encouraged **not** to delay writing the first two essays in the hope that you will pass the timed exam. Indeed, students who work hard writing Rhetoric 200 essays have a better chance on the timed exam because they are practicing effective writing. If you sit for this exam and fail, it will be too late for you to write three essays for Rhetoric 200, and you will be enrolled in the course again in the next term. Note that Rhetoric 200 is **not** offered in May Term: **if you do not pass Rhetoric 200 in the fall or spring of your senior year and if you do not pass the timed Rhetoric Proficiency Exam, you will not be graduated from the College and will have to return to campus the next year.**

Mechanics for submitting an essay:

Your essays are judged anonymously, so when you turn them in to your instructor for consideration by the panel, you should turn in **three** copies of the essay, two with title pages that **do not** include your name. **Do not include your name anywhere on the two copies of a paper to be submitted to the panel.**

When you submit an essay, you must also submit an abstract (usually a paragraph) that states your thesis and indicates how you support the thesis. Include the abstract with each of the three copies of the paper, **but do not include your name on the abstract.**

Deadlines:

There will be three set due dates for the three essays you write, and three set due dates for revised versions of these essays. **It is very important that you turn essays in on time, so that you have time to take advantage of this revision opportunity.** An essay turned in after the deadline will not be submitted to the panel for grading until the next essay due date. If you miss a deadline, you risk losing an opportunity to revise an essay.

Evaluation of essays:

Rhetoric 200 essays are evaluated by two readers drawn from a panel of faculty in all three divisions: the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. The panel does not include the instructor of Rhetoric 200. In addition, the same two readers will not be assigned to evaluate all three of your essays, so your writing will be judged by a wide variety of faculty from the college. The two readers assigned to judge an essay score it using the six-point scoring guide in Appendix B, in the same way that graders judge the proficiency exam: a score of 7 (at least a 3 from one reader and at least a 4 from the other) is required for an essay to pass. Readers will provide you with extensive comments about ways to revise, if they recommend revising. If an essay does not pass the first time the readers evaluate it, you may revise it according to their comments and under your instructor's supervision. However, a revised essay may be re-submitted only once, on a set due date. When all of your essays and revisions have been considered, the panel of readers will decide if you have performed satisfactorily, or if you must repeat the course.

Carrying essays over to the next semester:

If you do not complete all the requirements for Rhetoric 200 in one semester and are enrolled again in the next term, you may carry over any essays you have completed satisfactorily. Essays that are incomplete at the end of the semester may not be carried over to the next term.

Notation on the transcript:

Rhetoric 200 is a non-credit course, so you will receive neither credit hours toward graduation nor a final grade (A through F) in the course.

Failure to write three satisfactory essays, or to pass the Rhetoric Proficiency exam while you are enrolled in Rhetoric 200, results in an "unsatisfactory" notation on your transcript. You must then repeat the course. Satisfying the Rhetoric Proficiency requirement will result in the notation "satisfactory" on your transcript.

Rhetoric 200 Essays: Six-Point Holistic Scoring Guide

Top-half score (4, 5, or 6):

Despite differences among them, essays that earn a top-half score all demonstrate proficiency in the use of written language to express an idea. The writer chooses a topic in which he is clearly engaged; he articulates a significant thesis that governs the rest of the essay; he establishes a clear logical order that links paragraph to paragraph in a meaningful way. In supporting his argument, the writer makes lively use of evidence: he provides sufficient examples or other evidence to make his thesis persuasive, but his argument does not get lost among the details. His evidence (whether from secondary sources or from his own experience) is convincingly incorporated into the argument. As a result of these features, an essay that earns a top-half score is *developed* but not *repetitive*. An essay that earns a top-half score also exhibits competence on the sentence level: its language should be largely free of serious or frequent or distracting errors. Overall, essays that earn a top-half score persuade the reader that *the writer is in control of his argument and his language*.

Bottom-half score (1, 2, or 3):

Despite differences among them, essays that earn a bottom-half score leave the reader with the impression that much further revision is necessary. Such essays create the impression of *incompleteness* or *insufficiency* as a result of the writer's handling of his material or his rhetorical tools. Often such essays lack a clear thesis, while at other times the writer seems to oversimplify issues. Organization may be haphazard or illogical. Evidence in such essays often is anecdotal rather than substantial; frequently the writer relies heavily on one or two sources for all his information, perhaps accepting uncritically information from one or two insufficient websites. Because of such problems with thesis and evidence, essays that earn a bottom-half score are more often *repetitive* than *developed*. On the sentence level, the writer does not exhibit consistent control over the grammar and conventions of the language. Overall, essays that earn a bottom-half score do *not* persuade the reader that the writer is in control of his argument and his language.

6: An essay in this category develops an argument clearly, forcefully, and perhaps elegantly. The writer demonstrates lucid, orderly thinking and shows some degree of originality in his handling of a challenging topic. The writer uses sufficient, appropriate, and varied evidence, employing any secondary sources he uses so as to support his *own* ideas. Sophisticated word choice and sentence structures are further evidence of mature thinking: *the writer of an essay that earns a 6 demonstrates a control of language that extends well beyond simple correctness*. Such an essay will in addition be properly documented when documentation is required and *virtually* free from errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure.

5: An essay in this category demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic it addresses. It may be less thoughtful or less well reasoned than a 6 essay, but it will not be mere statement and restatement of generalized ideas. Though it may exhibit minor weaknesses in paragraphing, it will show that the writer can select appropriate and varied supporting evidence which he can organize in unified, coherent units and use in an intelligent way to augment his own ideas. The essay will be largely free from serious errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure and from errors in documentation. Its language will be characterized by clarity and precision if not by beauty.

4: Though not as comprehensive in its presentation or development of a thesis as a 5 or 6 essay, an essay that earns a 4 will present a largely well-reasoned argument on a subject of some complexity. The argument may not be detailed in its logic but is not flawed by logical fallacies. A point or two may be inadequately developed, but there will be sufficient evidence to support key assertions. A 4 essay reveals the writer's awareness that a good argument requires specific support, though he may rely too heavily on ideas or interpretations found in some of his secondary sources, when he uses sources. Any material drawn from secondary sources, however, will be properly documented. The essay may contain some minor errors in grammar, usage, sentence structure, or mechanics, but still it gives the impression that the writer is in control of his language. Altogether, the 4 essay is a readable and reasonably complete treatment of an idea.

3: An essay in this category shows a lack of clear, mature, or original thinking, exhibiting *serious difficulty* in one major area in its expression of an idea. The argument may lack tight logic and organization; **OR** the writer may provide little argument or evidence within a formulaic structure, perhaps drawing heavily on secondary sources for ideas as well as evidence; **OR** numerous serious errors in mechanics and word choice seriously interfere with readability. Repetition and a reliance on vague generalities, which combine to produce a plodding style, may characterize the essay. In addition, there may be some minor errors in documentation if the essay employs sources. In general, the writer of a 3 essay has not thought through his idea with sufficient clarity or in sufficient detail, and as a result, his essay is not vivid or coherent and leaves the reader dissatisfied or confused. Still, the writer shows promise, in that he succeeds in some of these tasks or comes close in all of them.

2: An essay in this category is seriously deficient in two or more areas: the quality or complexity of its idea; the selection and incorporation of evidence, whether from secondary sources or not; the organization of that evidence; the choice of words and formation of sentences. In other words, it exhibits the same sorts of difficulties in argument, logic, support, and style as a 3 essay, but it exhibits more of them. The 2 essay seems much further from proficiency than does a 3 essay. The writer may misuse or simply parrot ideas in his sources, if the essay is one that employs sources. He may simply string together a series of inadequately understood quotations. The 2 essay exhibits a minimum of thesis and structure, but its argument is unsupported and couched in inaccurate, vague language.

1: This category is reserved for the essay in which an essential conceptual confusion and disorganization create the impression of ineptitude and incoherence. The essay is unsatisfactory in all areas; the writer's ideas, use of evidence, and use of language are all out of control. The writer may have attempted to deal with the demands of the topic or he may have simply refused to make a commitment to the demands of the project.