

RHETORIC 100 GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

As a student at Hampden-Sydney, you will learn quickly that the College is committed to teaching writing, and you will find that you need to produce essays in a variety of disciplines. The Rhetoric Program provides a two- or three-semester sequence of courses to prepare you for the written assignments you will be given in the years to come. You will find that learning to write well leads to clear thinking; thus, your work in rhetoric classes is essential for the work you will do from now until graduation, and beyond. In fact, upperclassmen and graduates of Hampden-Sydney maintain that the Rhetoric Program is one of the most valuable features of the College's academic program.

Rhetoric 100 will prepare you for the Rhetoric 101-102 sequence.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *The Bedford Handbook*, 11th edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2020.

Recommended:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition. William Morris, ed. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1993. (You may substitute a dictionary of comparable quality.)

Your instructor will indicate additional texts, if any.

COURSE CONTENT

Rhetoric 100 prepares students for the argumentative and analytic writing required in Rhetoric 101-102 and in other courses at the College. As you learn about the writing process, a variety of assignments will help you plan your papers, collaborate with other students, and construct an argument, explanation, description, or narrative that is focused and interesting because of the evidence you present. You will learn to support your ideas by drawing on what you have read as well as what you have experienced and observed. In frequent conferences, your instructor will help you revise your papers.

Rhetoric 100 also offers a review of grammar and editing skills. You will gain an understanding of the way language works according to the conventions of grammar and usage so that you can edit your own writing with increased confidence. Many exercises will give you practice with sentence and paragraph construction. **You will write at least 4000 words of revised and edited prose during the semester (approximately 15 pages), including at least four essays written out of class and various in-class writing projects.**

FINAL ESSAY EXAMINATION

The final essay examination for all students in Rhetoric classes will be given on the final Tuesday of classes from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. You will write an essay of at least three pages and may use your dictionary and handbook. The essay topic will be based on a passage selected by the Rhetoric Program staff. The essay exam constitutes 7.5% of your final course grade.

COMPREHENSIVE EDITING EXAM

During the semester you will take at least two comprehensive, fifty-minute editing tests or the equivalent. There may also be additional tests and quizzes as indicated by the instructor.

A final comprehensive editing exam will be administered to all students in Rhetoric classes. The editing exam constitutes 7.5% of your final course grade.

If at the end of the semester unsatisfactory performance on your course work suggests that you may be unprepared for the challenges of Rhetoric 101, your work may be reviewed by the Rhetoric staff to determine whether you should pass 100 and advance to 101 or repeat 100.

RHETORIC STUDIO

The Rhetoric Studio, located in the Pannill Center below the Commons, is an excellent resource for all HSC community members. The Studio provides one-on-one assistance with a faculty or student consultant on any writing, speaking, or digital project. Whether you need help, writing a thesis, editing an essay, finding and citing sources, recording a podcast, brainstorming ideas, practicing a presentation, or creating a website, the Studio can help. The Rhetoric Studio is open Sundays through Thursdays, typically from noon to midnight.

Drop-ins are always welcome or you can schedule an appointment by going to: hsc.mywconline.com. You can also click on the button on the HSC “Current Student” page, get help at rhetoricstudio.hsc.edu, or simply open your phone’s camera app and point it at the QR code below!



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. 304–361 of *The Bedford Handbook*).

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 MLA style of documentation (updated in 2016), a style that requires that writers cite their sources in parenthetical

acknowledgments in their texts. See *The Bedford Handbook*, pp. 304–350. Pages 316–350 in *The Bedford Handbook* provide guidelines for constructing entries in a “Works Cited” list, and pages 355–361 offer a sample research paper using MLA citation. 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 351–361 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

First, professors assume that any paper submitted by a student for any class was prepared by that student for that specific class. You may not turn in a single paper for two or more different classes/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.

Second, you should include the following pledge at the end of each paper you write for your Rhetoric 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)

CREDIT AND GRADING

You will receive three hours of humanities elective credit toward graduation for passing Rhetoric 100, and you will receive a grade of A through F, just as you would in any other course. But Rhetoric 100 will not substitute for either Rhetoric 101 or 102 to satisfy the two-semester Rhetoric requirement, so you must complete the 101-102 sequence as well. If you perform exceptionally well in 100, however, you may move directly to Rhetoric 102 without taking 101. If your 100 work is very strong, your instructor will inform you about this option and will work with you to prepare for 102.

Rhetoric 100 is not a required course. After carefully reviewing each student's test scores, high school record, and placement exams, the director of the Rhetoric Program recommends that

students be placed in Rhetoric 100. Students may decide not to take the course and instead enroll in Rhetoric 101. Most students whose placement test scores indicate they should enroll in 100, though, benefit a great deal from the additional semester of Rhetoric. Thus you are strongly encouraged to remain in the course and should consult with your adviser and with the director of the Rhetoric Program before making any decisions about moving to 101.

RHETORIC REQUIREMENTS BEYOND 101-102

When you have completed three semesters at the College, you will be asked to take the Rhetoric Proficiency Exam, a timed essay examination. It is in your best interest to take this exam as soon as you are eligible, usually in the second semester of the sophomore year. All students are required to pass this exam in order to graduate. A panel of graders drawn from the faculty at large will judge the exams, grading them on the six-point scale (see Appendix B).

Students will write the Rhetoric Proficiency exam by hand, unless they have a letter from the Dean of the College indicating that they may use a computer because of special circumstances.

If you have not passed the timed Rhetoric Proficiency Examination after three attempts or have completed the equivalent of six semesters of enrollment without passing the examination, you will be enrolled during your next semester in a three-hour, noncredit course, Rhetoric 200: Proficiency Tutorial. In Rhetoric 200, students are asked to write three essays (6-8 pages each) with the guidance of an instructor in the Rhetoric Program. A panel of readers drawn from the faculty at large evaluates the finished essays. If the essays are judged satisfactory, the student has fulfilled the College's requirement of proficiency in writing, provided that he has also passed Rhetoric 101 and 102. If the essays are judged unsatisfactory, the student will be enrolled in Rhetoric 200 again.

This requirement applies equally to all students, including transfer students.

Appendix A

Materials in *The Bedford Handbook* covered in all sections of Rhetoric 100:

Part 1: A Process for Writing

- 1 Exploring, planning, and drafting (p. 2)**
 - 1a Assess your writing situation
 - 1b Explore your subject
 - 1c Draft and Revise a working thesis statement
 - 1d Draft a plan
 - 1e Draft an introduction
 - 1f Draft the body
 - 1g Draft a conclusion
- 2 Building effective paragraphs (p. 14)**

- 2a Focus on main point
- 2b Make paragraphs coherent
- 2c Choose a suitable strategy for developing paragraphs

3 Revising, editing, and proofreading (p. 27)

- 3a Use peer review: Revise with comments
- 3b Use peer review: Give constructive comments
- 3c Approach global revision in cycles
- 3d Revise and edit sentences
- 3e Format and proofread the final version of your writing

Part 3: Clear Sentences

12 Repair misplaced and dangling modifiers (p. 92)

- 12a Put limiting modifiers in front of the words they modify
- 12b Place phrases and clauses so that readers can see at a glance what they modify
- 12c Avoid split infinitives when they are awkward
- 12d Repair dangling modifiers

Part 5: Grammatical Sentences

20 Repair sentence fragments (p. 128)

- 20a Attach fragmented subordinate clauses or turn them into sentences
- 20b Attach fragmented phrases or turn them into sentences
- 20c Attach other fragmented word groups or turn them into sentences

21 Revise run-on sentences (p. 132)

- 21a Consider separating the clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction
- 21b Consider separating the clauses with a semicolon, a colon, or a dash
- 21c Consider making the clauses into separate sentences.
- 21d Consider restructuring the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses

22 Make subjects and verbs agree (p. 135)

- 22a Learn to recognize standard subject-verb combinations
- 22b Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between
- 22c Treat most subjects joined with *and* as plural
- 22d With subjects joined with *or* or *nor*, make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb
- 22e Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular
- 22f Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly

- plural
- 22g Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb
- 22h make the verb agree with its subject, not with a subject complement
- 22i With *who*, *which*, and *that*, use verbs that agree with their antecedents
- 22j Treat titles of works, company names, and words mentioned as words as singular

Additional material may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor and according to the needs and progress of the class.

Appendix B

Six Point Scale for Scoring Rhetoric Essay Exams

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

Despite difference among them, papers that receive a top-half score all demonstrate proficiency in the use of written language to express an idea: The writer conceives a thesis that develops a thought beyond the terms set out in the question; he focuses on a single idea; he argues a case logically; he develops, not simply repeats, an argument; he provides specific evidence; he writes in language free of serious or frequent or distracting errors. In other words, papers receiving top-half scores present a focused thesis, a solid logical argument, specific evidence, and a sense of control over the essential idiomatic and traditional patterns of English grammar and style. Such essays give an impression of independent, mature thinking and *readability*.

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

Papers that receive a bottom-half score leave the reader with a sense that the essay needs further revision; they give an overall impression of deficiency of thought and/or expression, an impression produced by the writer's having difficulty with one or more important aspects of written expression. Some feature or combination of features in the essay — ranging from egregious errors of historical fact or inaccurate representation of ideas in the essay topic, to a poorly conceived or poorly expressed thesis, to an illogical organization of evidence, to an error-filled writing style — seriously impedes the reader's ability to follow the argument.

6: An essay in this category expresses an idea clearly, forcefully, and perhaps elegantly. The writer demonstrates lucid, orderly thinking and shows some degree of originality in his handling of the topic. The key difference between the 6 essay and the 5 essay may, in fact, rest in the *greater originality of the thesis* in the 6 essay. The writer uses sufficient, appropriate, varied evidence to support his idea. Sophisticated word choice and sentence structures are further evidence of mature thinking: *The writer of such an essay demonstrates a control of language that extends well beyond simple correctness.* An essay that receives this score will be *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 and an assurance in the writer's use of language. It may be less thoughtful or less well reasoned (perhaps more one-sided in its argument) 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. The writer's examples are well chosen, and he has done a good job of integrating those examples into his text. Overall, it is an essay with notable strength in at least one area; it does not exhibit any serious weakness in any area, and in this regard it is a better essay than the 4 essay. The 5 essay, again, as opposed to the 4 essay, will be *largely* free from serious errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure. Its language will be characterized by clarity if not beauty.

4: Though not as comprehensive in its treatment of an idea as a 5 or 6 essay, an essay in this category will present a largely well-reasoned and readable argument. Overall, it gives the sense that the writer is *in control* of the structure of the essay and of his language. The writer establishes a thesis and sticks with it, provides well-developed, detailed examples (perhaps a well-integrated personal example) in coherent paragraphs and organizes those paragraphs so that the reader has a sense of *the progression of the argument*, and uses forceful phrasing to convey the ideas. A point or two may be inadequately developed (the essay may be more uneven in its success than a 5 essay) or it may rely on formulaic structure. But the 4 essay will provide specific evidence to support key points. It may contain errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure, but still it gives the impression of fluency, an impression that the writer of the 3 essay does not convey. The paper's overall style does not distract the reader from the content, but instead facilitates the expression of the idea or even makes it interesting.

3: An essay in this category exhibits *serious difficulty* in the expression of an idea and leaves the reader with the sense that the essay has been inadequately revised. It shows a lack of clear, mature, or original thinking. The argument may lack tight logic and organization, its organization being circular or shifting. The writer may provide little argument or evidence within a formulaic structure with paragraphs lacking adequate development, producing an impression of shallow or superficial thinking. *Problems with development are perhaps the most characteristic flaw of the 3 essay.* The writer may make assertions without defending his ideas with reasons and evidence, he may neglect to define key terms, or he may rely heavily on quotations from the exam topic instead of providing evidence of his own. On the other hand, the writer may provide evidence without tying it to a thesis, or he may write a narrative that lacks a clear point. *Repetition is a typical problem in the 3 essay;* repetition and a reliance on vague generalities may combine to produce a plodding style. An overall infelicity of expression may characterize the essay. Numerous serious errors in mechanics and word choice may also seriously interfere with readability. In general, a 3 essay seems less vivid, less coherent, less developed and specific, less confident than a 4 essay. Still, the 3 essay differs from the 2 essay in that the writer of the 3 essay succeeds in some of the writing tasks or comes close in all of them.

2: A paper in this category is *seriously deficient*. It exhibits the same sorts of difficulty as a 3 paper, but it exhibits more of them, and consequently this writer seems much further from writing a competent essay than the writer of a 3 essay. The argument may be simplistic and may be couched in inaccurate, vague language; the argument may be unsupported and its organization may be rambling. Problems with paragraph development and in logical development of the argument may be the most characteristic features of the 2 essay. The writing in this essay may also exhibit numerous mechanical errors that seriously impede readers' ability to follow the argument. Still, the 2 essay differs from the 1 essay in that

the 2 essay exhibits a minimum of thesis and structure; in some cases it doesn't say much, and what it does say is said badly.

1: This category is reserved for the essay in which a combination of errors, conceptual confusion, and disorganization creates the impression of *ineptitude* and *incoherence* far beyond that typical of the 2 essay. The writer may attempt to deal with the demands of the topic, his essay may have some form and an indefinite idea, but overall his effort is far from bearing fruit in good writing.

(Basic template and some language drawn from Edward M. White, *Teaching and Assessing Writing* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985).
Revised repeatedly and supplemented by faculty at Hampden-Sydney College, 1985-present.)