

Comp Quickreads

CSULA Department of English

November 30, 2009

Preparing for the Next Course

Outcomes for ENGL 101

(selected from the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition")

By the end of first year composition, students should

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- Learn to critique their own and others' works
- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

As students and faculty scramble to finish up the current quarter and the current course, both might be interested in what comes next. At CSULA, students must satisfactorily complete ENGL 101 to satisfy the written communications requirement of general education (GE), or receive transfer credit for an equivalent course. Students must also complete ENGL 102, which while not technically part of GE is an additional writing course required of all students.

Many of our first-year students, however, are required to take courses before they are eligible to take ENGL 101. These courses, ENGL 095 and ENGL 096, are developmental courses designed to ready under-prepared students for the challenges of ENGL 101. Rather than think of these courses, though, as separate and independent, it makes more sense to think of them as part of course sequences. Students, therefore, satisfy their GE written communications requirement by taking: a one-quarter composition course (ENGL 101), a two-quarter composition course (ENGL 096-101), or a three-quarter composition course ENGL 095-096-101).

For most students, then, their composition course in Winter will simply be an extension of their Fall course. Since the primary objectives of ENGL 095 are focus, fluency, and rhetorical awareness, Winter term 096 instructors can expect their students to be capable in these areas. Since the primary objectives of ENGL 096 are the same as 095 plus the ability to engage critically with texts, Winter term 101 instructors can expect their students to be capable in these areas.

ENGL 102 instructors, however, cannot generalize about their students' preparation. Students in ENGL 102 might have taken ENGL 095, 096 and 101, or 096 and 101, or only 101 at

CSULA. They might have received AP credit for ENGL 101 and therefore not taken any composition at CSULA. They might be transfer students coming from an institution where they might have taken one, two, or even three lower division composition courses, but are required to take ENGL 102 because none of their courses articulate to CSULA's

This is the last Comp Quickreads of the quarter. Look for its return the second week of the Winter term.

ENGL 102. Ideally, students starting ENGL 102 should possess the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve all of the "outcomes" listed under "Outcomes for ENGL 101" (see sidebar). These outcomes are taken directly from the Writing Program Administrators' "Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition." Experienced ENGL 102 instructors know, however, that there will be wide variation in the readiness of their students. The primary objective of ENGL 102 is to provide more advanced practice in writing and to introduce students to basic research methodologies, but the reality is that some students are not sufficiently prepared for "more advanced practice."

Finally, students currently enrolled in ENGL 102 have further university writing requirements on their horizon. To graduate, students are not only required to complete ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 (or receive transfer credit for equivalent courses), they must also pass the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE), and complete an upper division writing course in their major. So while our work ends with ENGL 102, our efforts to prepare students for success will hopefully continue to support them throughout their academic career.