

## CLAS Guidelines for Writing ('W') Courses

Adopted by the CLAS Committee on Curricula & Courses 12 April, 1988

A 200-level CLAS course which a) emphasizes students' writing as a principal element of their performance and evaluation to the degree that a passing final grade depends upon its satisfactory execution, and b) includes faculty instruction and supervision of student writing as a normal part of the course, may be designated a W course.

In W courses developed from earlier, non-W courses, instructors typically substitute writing assignments for some other means of testing, usually exams, and the time students put into paper writing takes the place of the time they would have used studying for exams. Such "cloned" versions bear the same credit as their parent courses. If, on the other hand, a course actually *adds* contact hours when it becomes a W, its credit *may* be increased. Such decisions are made by the C&C Committee on a course by course basis.

As in the case of any proposal to offer or modify a course, the CLAS Curricula and Courses committee must approve a department's plan to offer W and non-W versions of any course simultaneously. In such cases, reasons must be presented and explanation provided of how the two versions will be coordinated so that the W students receive appropriate attention to their writing efforts. As a general rule, mixing W and non-W students in the same class is not permitted, since part of the class time in a W course is concerned with writing. In courses which have extra meetings for W students, this objection may not apply.

100's-level courses are not normally approved as W courses. A W course should be elected after English 105 and 109, and should be an advanced course with writing. To avoid unnecessary administrative detail, however, English 105 and 109 are not identified as course prerequisites to W courses.

*General characteristics* -- A W course normally reflects one of three conditions: either it is designed as a W course for all its enrollees, *or* it is designed in two versions, one *not* a W, *or* it is a standard non-W course, enhanced for some students by adding a writing component. Provisions for each type are as follows:

1. *W Course, no corresponding non-W version* -- If the content and procedures of a course will routinely require the production, supervision and evaluation of written student work to the degree specified by the published college W guidelines, it may be designated a W course. Such a course may not be elected on a non-W basis.
2. *W Course, with a corresponding non-W version* -- Should a department wish to list for equivalent credit concurrent, alternate versions of such a course,
  - a. the department head, upon requesting approval and from time to time thereafter, must certify to the C & C committee or the dean that the course content of both versions is substantially identical and that the required student writing in the W version matches equitably the student work and evaluation required in the non-W version.
  - b. W and non-W versions of such courses will be viewed as different *sections* of the one course, to be distinguished from each other by the *Bulletin's* 4-digit listing system (see *below*).
  - c. Students electing such a course as a W offering *may not be commingled* with students in a non-W version of the course.
3. *W Course as an enhanced version of a non-W course* -- Should a department (for example, a science department) seek to reflect, by *additional* writing requirements suitable for W designation, the enhancement of any course, it must demonstrate that in its enhanced version the course will require substantial student writing of such an amount and character that the attainment of a passing final grade will depend upon its successful execution. Appropriate additional credit may be approved for such a W version, provided that corresponding teacher-student contact (either classroom or tutorial) be appropriately added, and attested by

the department head. W and non-W students may be commingled in the *regular* (non-W) meetings of such a course.

(Note that in (2) the department must ensure a reasonable parity of workload among students in all sections (versions) of the course; in (3), all students share the same basic subject workload, tests, etc., but *some* will undertake additional W-related work, typically in a different setting.)

*Minimum course requirements* -- In a W course, special attention is devoted to teaching the student to write clearly and cogently; substantial writing assignments are required. A W designation assumes that the writing in the course (whether lengthy papers, several short papers or successive drafts) will be supervised while it is in process. In addition, the committee requires that the syllabus (or similar announcement; see *below*) of a W course indicate how the instructor's involvement with student writing will occur (in-class discussion of writing or comments on submitted work; office consultations, etc.).

*Quantity of student writing:* Minimum of 15 typed double-spaced finished pages, or the equivalent (about 4000 words). Early discussion of W courses in the College made frequent reference to the so-called "50% rule," the faculty's assertion that in a properly designed W course, "half the grade ought to depend on writing." Subsequent experience and CLAS disciplinary variety has diminished the utility of college-wide prescriptions about proportional weighting of written work as a basis for W-course grades. Nevertheless, the committee takes the view that the requirement's spirit still finds expression in "half the grade ought to depend on writing;" instructors must ensure that both the quality and quantity of student written work is such that its unsatisfactory execution will prevent achievement of a passing final course grade.

While the teaching and execution of writing in certain disciplines (e.g., some sciences) might profitably employ special techniques, course material must not be scanted in favor of W matters (or *vice versa*), nor ought courses bearing the same number and title be substantially differentiated for two different groups of students. Such arrangements should be planned with care, especially in light of the recent (5 May 1987) CLAS faculty decision to delete all 'clone' numbers for W and Q courses and revert those courses to their old numbers, with the attached letter designating the "skills" version (e.g., 2xx, 2xxW, 2xxQ, etc.) Both the original and any skills versions of the course will be listed in the *Bulletin*.

David Sonstroem's *The Style Booklet*, published by the English department and available at the UConn Coop, is a useful reference for faculty and students with technical questions about writing.

#### *Special Departmental Concerns*

Department heads will furnish instructors in W courses with copies of these guidelines at the beginning of each semester. Instructors should also be made aware that student evaluations will occasionally monitor conformity to the guidelines for W courses.

Appropriate enrollment limits are determined by the department head, faculty member and dean.

In order to ensure availability of adequate information about each W-course listing in the college, the instructor in each W course *must* distribute to students at the beginning of each semester a brief statement describing how the W requirement will be met. This should specify the amount and character of the required writing, a calendar of assignments due, provisions to ensure periodic consultation between instructor and student on the written work, and the relationship of student writing to the final course mark.

Each semester a copy of the handout distributed in each W course or section should be filed with the department head, to be available for review by the dean and the C&C committee.