

# ISU Writing Program: Course Requirements for ENG 145

## Course Design Requirements for ENG 145

Because ENG 145 is a General Education course at ISU and because it needs to meet the requirements of the Illinois Articulation Initiative, there are certain aspects of the course that need to be the same across all sections. However, the ISU Writing Program and instructors have agreed that this kind of uniformity need not be achieved through a “common syllabus”. Instead, we’ve decided to work with a set of requirements that meet or exceed the requirements of the university and State of Illinois. Instructors have the freedom to design innovative courses that work with a wide range of genres, employ a wide range of assessment and grading methods, and work with a wide range of topics and ideas. However, each instructor should be familiar with the following requirements, and be confident that the course s/he has designed meets (or exceeds) the requirements.

### Learning Outcomes

There are learning outcomes appropriate to each Writing Program Course. Instructors should make sure that they are addressing each of the learning outcomes in a significant way, and also that their assessments and grading practices are clearly connected with the learning outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

### Required Research Elements

These items are different from the Program Learning Outcomes, and we expect instructors to make sure that each section of ENG 145 contains these elements as part of its class plan. How these elements are organized and what projects/genres they are a part of is up to the instructors.

- 1. Content and Genre Research:** Since “researching literate activity” is a core component of our program, instructors will need to make sure that all projects include some kind of research into the actual activity system (we call that *genre research*) in which a particular piece of writing occurs. However, instructors should also provide opportunities for students to do *content research* on various topics as well.
- 2. Formal, Documented Research Component to all Projects:** Our goal here is to make sure that multiple projects throughout the semester include not only *content and genre research*, but that this research be documented and included as part of the *grade* for the project. This means that if you have a project where the actual “genre-of-production” is one where formal, cited research would be inappropriate (for example, a news article, brochure, or Public Service Announcement), you

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<sup>1</sup> Learning Outcomes are fully listed later in this section, but they can also be downloaded from our [www.isuwriting.com](http://www.isuwriting.com) website.

should make sure that students document their *content/genre* research in the form of some kind of formal writing -- a report or other kind of cited document -- that can be assessed as part of the grade for the project. When designing your syllabus, make sure to consider what the “formal, documented research component” for that project would be, and make sure to include it as part of the **graded** work for the project.

3. **Researched Writing that Includes Citations:** At least one (but preferably more) of the projects in ENG 145 should include discussion and practice of various citation methods. Students should definitely explore the citation styles that are most common in their disciplinary scholarly journals. However, each project (if possible) should also include some type of *formal, documented research component*. Remember that there are two important aspects related to citation that you should be continually addressing:
  - That citation practices vary in different kinds of writing settings;
  - But in many, many settings it is critical to be able to accurately document where information comes from (note that discussions of practices in citing digital information are critical).
  
4. **Researched Writing that is for a “Real World” Audience:** At least one project in the course should include researched writing that is specifically designed for a public audience. Obviously, when students can focus on research in their disciplinary areas that can be beneficial, but it’s also possible to have them focus on other kinds of general research venues appropriate for undergraduate authors (for example, the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*). While we don’t advise producing any kind of “generic” or “school genre” research paper, we do think this kind of project can be effective if instructors ask students to consider “real-world” writing venues.<sup>2</sup>
  
5. **A Note on Project Length:** At least one project in the course should include content research (see #3) that is 4000 words (approximately 8 pages or the equivalent if multimodal) in length. This would be excluding the additional “genre research” that students might be doing for the project. In general, the project that meets this length requirement would also coincide with the “researched writing” project. Basically, this simply means that all instructors should include one longer project, where the composition (or composing time, if multimodal) is longer than the other projects.
  
6. **Writing Research and Genre Investigation:** Again, because “the investigation of literate activity” is a core principle of our writing program, instructors need to make sure that this is a focus for the course. The concepts of “writing research” should inform all the projects in the course, but we’d prefer it if the longer, *researched writing project* was also a project that asked students to investigate literate activity (and perhaps produce writing appropriate for the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*). However, this isn’t a required element, because instructors can achieve a “writing research” focus by focusing on this work as part of the *Formal, Documented Research Component* for each project, even if they don’t include writing research as the focus of their researched writing project. In brief: We think it would be great if you had student do a longer “writing research” project that specifically focused on how writing gets done in the world. But you can choose not to have this kind of project, as long as you have them do genre research as a

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<sup>2</sup> Our new “How to Research” wiki will provide links to a wide range of real-world venues appropriate for undergraduate-level writers.

component of the other projects.

7. **Sentence-Level and Linguistic Research:** It's important that instructors include assignments where the accuracy of the choices a student makes regarding grammar, style, organization, etc. have an impact on the final grade. Although we are striving to assess "learning not mastery" (see assessment section of this Instructor's Guide, next) it's still important for students to be able to document their learning about these critical choices – which often occurs at the sentence or even word-level. This means that instructors should regularly include discussions of these issues as part of the work of each project.
8. **Finding and Using Source Materials Effectively:** It's critical that instructor's include not only multiple opportunities for students to engage in research, but that they actively teach and include discussions on how to effectively find and use information. Since we are focusing on documented research for both *genre and content* research, these discussions can be a regular part of the class work for each project. Your ISU librarian can also help you with ideas for this kind of instruction.
9. **Research Methods:** We would like all instructors to think carefully about the kinds of research methods that are included in both the content and genre research you ask students to produce. This become particularly important in ENG 145, where students should definitely become familiar with the kinds of research methods us to produce different kinds of scholarly and workplace research in their discipline. Rather than simply focusing on finding source materials through traditional print-or-digital library sources, we'd like instructors to actively engage with one or more specific types of research methods that are used in a range of disciplines<sup>3</sup>.

### Assessment Practices

The requirements for assessment practices are specific to our program's goals. In general, following these requirements as an instructor for ENG 145 will meet or exceed any university or State of Illinois Requirements. These elements are discussed elsewhere in the instructors' guide, but we wanted to make sure instructors remember that the approach to assessment is required for all ENG 145 courses.

1. **Connect to Learning Outcomes:** Instructors should make sure to connect the work the class is doing to the Program Learning Outcomes. Doing so is one way to make sure students understand that each section of ENG 145 is doing similar work, no matter how different assignments might be. Additionally, discussing the Learning Outcomes with students and clearly articulating how these outcomes are reached through the work of the class can help students see and understand the value of the work (because just placing the outcomes in your syllabus may not be enough). We expect instructors to clearly articulate for students how the assignments they've selected achieve the learning outcomes (but we would like it even better if it could become part of an ongoing conversation you have with your students).
2. **Assess Learning Not Mastery:** This concept does *not* mean that we are not grading students for

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<sup>3</sup> See our *Researched Writing & Writing Research Resources* page: [www.isuwriting/research](http://www.isuwriting/research) for more information and tools for engaging in discussions of various kinds of research methods.

rigorous work, or that we don't care what kind of work they produce, or that "effort" or "improvement" is what we're grading.<sup>4</sup> Rather, this means that students must produce *not only* the kind of text the assignment requires, they must also be able to articulate a clear understanding and knowledge of *why* the text needed to be produced in certain ways, and what, exactly they did to create the appropriate text. This focus on grading does also mean that students will be graded for both the produced text and the documentation-of-learning text, and it also means that students may, in some cases, be able to get credit for knowing (and clearly articulating) what should be done, even when they can't yet do it as well as they'd like.

3. **Engage in Formative Assessments:** The research on formative assessment shows clearly that designing assignments that effectively show students how to assess where they are in a particular learning process, and helps them to articulate (for themselves) the steps they need to take to complete a task successfully can "do as much or more to improve student achievement than any of the most powerful instructional interventions, intensive reading instruction, one-on-one tutoring and the like" (Shephard 627).<sup>5</sup> Thus, we expect our teaching to actively engage in the construction of *formative assessments* that work alongside the writing process to help students gauge their work in productive ways.
4. **Involve Students in the Development of Assessment and Grading Criteria:** In all of the aspects of assessment listed in items 1-3 (above) instructors should make sure that they are engaging students in the decision-making process as much as possible. Our focus on documenting learning and formative assessment both require instructors to do more than engage in a top-down model of instruction. Put simply, students will better understand what they themselves help to build.

### Grading Practices

(Note: This policy is the same for all Writing Program courses and can also be found in the Program Policies section, 7.1)

Our grading policies are designed to offer students feedback about the overall quality of their work in the course. While instructors will have a great deal of flexibility in how they design and enact grading policies, there will be certain basic policies that should be followed by everyone. While grades can be affected by extra-course issues such as attendance, tardiness, incomplete work, etc., here are the key points we want to remember at all times:

Grades should be primarily based on students' ability to learn and to showcase their learning processes related to both producing textual artifacts and understanding how such artifacts are produced -- this means that our goal is *not* to grade the quality of final productions, but the quality of learning as exemplified by students' abilities to demonstrate/articulate what they know (and don't know) about how to write in a particular genre/situation. This learning can (and should) be incorporated into their written productions, but grades should (as much as possible) be based on the author's ability to identify/articulate what he/she has done (because in some cases the ability to know how to do it is not directly tied to the ability to articulate what one has done (or ought to be doing -- but can't yet).

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<sup>4</sup> This issue is discussed in much more detail in the Philosophies and Concepts section of the Instructor's Guide, section 1.2, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Shepard, Lorrie A. "Classroom Assessment." *Educational Measurement Fourth Edition*. Ed. Robert L. Brennan. Westport, CT: American Council on Education Praeger, 2006. 623-646.

We do want students to attend class, so penalties for attendance/missed work are acceptable (see attendance policy below). However, we also want to make sure that we offer, in each class period, information and activities that lead in obvious ways toward the needed knowledge to produce the assigned work (and assessment/articulation of that work). So if you find yourself saying, “she got a B because she missed class, but all her writing was really A quality,” you may want to rethink either your grading practices or your classroom activities (or both).

A student who: attends the course without excessive absences, participates in daily activities, completes original work in a timely manner, and does not turn in work that is drastically incomplete (i.e., it might be missing an element or two of the activities for the project, but enough is there to show that he/she definitely did the work), should NOT FAIL THE COURSE. If you have a syllabus that results in this kind of failure, then you should carefully review and change your grading policies.

Students should be able to understand the criteria being used to assess grades. From our genre perspective, this means that (whether you use student-grading or you assess grades) **genre discussions are a critical means of creating the criteria through which student work is graded.**

It is **not** acceptable for a course design to give final grades for significant projects that students have not had a chance to revise (with feedback). In addition, the program does not support a semester-based portfolio method in which students receive no grades until the end of the semester.

Course grades should reflect (as a whole) the Learning Outcomes appropriate to that course (101/145) and the specific course requirements.

### **The Grading Scale**

**The ISU Writing Program uses the following grading scale (without – or + grades)**

**90-100 = A**

**80-89 = B**

**70-79 = C**

**60-69 = D**

**0-59 = F**

Instructors are not required to offer numeric scores for grades on either projects or portfolios, but offering numerical grades can be a good way to clarify achievement for students. If you are quantifying other aspects of course activities (class participation, in-class writing, etc.), then you should also quantify project/portfolio grades.

However, if you are using a portfolio system with provisional grades, letter grades for provisional grades are often more appropriate than numerical grades because they represent a loosely defined assessment that is subject to significant change. In this case, assigning numerical value can create more rigidity than the instructor might want.

### **Working with Technology**

Our ENG 145 classes are in computer labs for a reason. That reason is that students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need both access to online methods and procedures for doing research (in our case, both *Writing Research* and *Content Research*), and they also need to learn how to produce multimodal texts and texts appropriate for “native digital” environments. We want instructors to make every effort to use the computers in our classrooms as more than word processors. At the very least, we expect you to make use of these networked tools to teach students about the habits and processes on doing research in online environments. But we’d also like to see instructors use these tools innovatively when it comes to thinking about the genres you and your students might investigate and produce.

### **Global Perspectives**

This is an area where we hope the ISU Writing Program will exceed the expectations of the University. Right now, teaching students to understand and participate in global literate settings is not part of our mandate for ENG 145, although it is part of the goals for ISU’s General Education Curriculum. However, we’d like to participate in helping students to reach this General Education goal in ENG 145. Therefore, instructors need to think about and plan for assignments that ask students to consider a more global perspective in their communications. This can (like many of our other goals and requirements) be achieved in a wide range of ways, through many different kinds of assignments.

### **Textbooks and Resource Materials**

Sections of ENG 145 require students to purchase *the Grassroots Writing Research Journal*. On our website ([www.isuwriting.com/grassroots](http://www.isuwriting.com/grassroots)) you’ll find many resources for figuring out how to use the journal effectively as part of your 145 class.

There are no other required texts for this course. We don’t have a workbook or textbooks or required handouts for students. However, we do provide a wide range of resources for teachers – to help you think through best practices in assignment design, to help you better understand important concepts that we want to share with students like CHAT or trajectory or genre. In some cases, we do provide explanations and handouts that can be shared with students, but we don’t require instructors to use them. Instead, we use your first year as instructors at ISU to help you to learn what you need to know in order to design your own materials – assignments that meet our learning outcomes, designs for helping students to document their learning effectively, formative assessment practices that can help students articulate their own learning, etc. Our position is that, once trained, you are the best person to decide what will (or might) be effective materials for the classes you teach. That said, we want to make sure you have the resources you need. So if you need help with assignment design, please make use of our Writing Program archive of materials to learn more about possible effective practices for your classroom, or meet with a member of the Writing Program team to discuss your ideas.

## **ENG 145 Learning Outcomes**

Illinois State University Writing Program

## Normal, IL

The primary goal of English 145 is to prepare students for the continuation of writing and researching in their academic disciplines as well as preparing students for writing and researching within their professional fields. Here are some things you should consider when looking at these learning objectives. When the term discipline is used, that is a reference to the students' academic discipline (e.g. psychology, criminal justice, etc.). When the term field is used, that is a reference to the fields in which students will actually be working (e.g. psychologist, law enforcement officer, etc.).

### Identifying Genres

- Students should be able to identify, articulate, and produce genres in their academic discipline and/or in their potential career fields.
- Once students have identified said genres, then they should be knowledgeable of genre conventions (or rules) and should be able to produce genres that adhere to those conventions (or rules).
- Students should be able to articulate discipline and field specific information in written, spoken and/or visual genres.
- Students should be able to differentiate between genres in their academic discipline and genres in other academic disciplines.

### Creating Content for Multiple Settings and Modalities

- Students should be able to create content in multiple genres, particularly genres related to working and learning in various types of business-related settings in the workplace and in academia.
- Students should be able to employ cognitive/conceptual skills related to argument and analysis (and other rhetorical strategies) in their textual productions, and be able to identify the use of these strategies in their own productions.
- Students should be able to employ a range of other skills (a knowledge of mechanics, style, different production modalities, etc.) and defend their choices as a thoughtful response to specific writing and genre situations. Students should be able to decide on and use appropriate digital and print technologies to produce a genre (based on the genre's required features).
- Students should be able to demonstrate (through written or verbal communication) how a given text is affected by the use of different technologies or media (in terms of its conception, production, and distribution, as well as the potential ways the text may be taken up by users).

### Flexible Research Skills

- Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of what constitutes research within their professional fields.
- Students should be familiar with a variety of data collection methods specific to their field. These methods may include but are not limited to: use of printed materials and digital databases, use of archival resources, direct observations and interviews, and the creation and use of surveys, focus groups and case studies.
- Students should be able to identify and use library databases, scholarly journals, and trade journals used most frequently within their major area of study and within their professional fields.
- Students should know what constitutes valid, reliable and appropriate source material within their professional field.
- Students should understand the role that research plays in writing and communicating within their academic discipline and professional field.
- Students should expect to research and produce genres in group/team environments.

### **Using Citation Formats and Citing Source Materials**

- Students should have a general understanding of the different types of citation styles used in academic disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.), and how those citation styles may or may not transfer directly to their academic discipline.
- Students should recognize that there are alternative means of citing (or giving credit to) sources in different business and professional genres.
- Students should be able to integrate source material into written genres in ways appropriate to that genre and citation style.
- Students should also know how to cite (or give credit to) sources in oral, visual and multi-modal genres.

### **Discourse Communities**

- Students should demonstrate an understanding of how written, oral and visual communication is shaped by discourse communities within their academic discipline and/or professional field.
- Students should demonstrate experience with one or more discourse communities already established within their field. This can be accomplished through researching, subscribing to, contributing to, and/or otherwise participating in groups including (but not limited to) professional associations, business fraternities, twitter streams, professional/trade magazines, or annual conferences or conventions.
- Students should understand that different discourse communities (especially within different fields and different workplace settings) differently shape the manner in which genres are produced.

### **Trajectory**

- Students should demonstrate knowledge of the following aspects of the trajectories of texts:
  - The trajectory of a texts (where it goes and what it does) is necessarily connected to the ways that it is produced and distributed.
  - The trajectory of any text or genre is not simple, unidirectional, or isolated; instead, the trajectory of a given text is complex, multi-directional, and non-linear.
  - The trajectory of a text does not end once it has reached its desired/designated receiver.
  - The various individuals and groups that receive a text (and use it) may do so in ways that are unexpected or unintended by the author/producers.

### **Globalization, Cultural Contexts and Diversity**

- Students should be able to recognize how international, multicultural, and culturally diverse settings impact and shape the ways that different genres are composed and received by reader/users.
- Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of how to produce genres in ways that take international, multicultural, and culturally diverse settings, practices, and ideologies into consideration.
- Students should be able to recognize the ways in which international, multicultural, and culturally diverse settings impact their respective discourse communities.

### **Ethics**

- Students should be familiar with codes of conduct, ethical behaviors and practices, and guidelines for responsible research within their professional fields.
- Students should adhere to established ethical guidelines within their respective discourse communities.
- Students should recognize that ethical behavior may be interpreted differently within different cultural, social, and global contexts, and be able to work within different ethical frameworks that may vary subtly.