ISU Writing Program: Specific Information for ENG 101

ENG 101 is the introductory writing course that almost all incoming ISU students take, so we’ve got students from all majors and from different high school systems, and even students who’ve been studying at a community college for a couple of years who will be in our classes. Transfer students to ISU also take the course. The two scenarios that may allow students to skip ENG 101 are taking an introductory course at the community college level or having Advanced Placement (AP) english credit from their high school studies.

ISU also has a speech course, COMM 110, and most new students take both COMM 110 and ENG 101 in their first year at ISU; either taking our course during the fall semester and COMM 110 in spring, or the inverse. Students who register earliest tend to want to sign up for ENG 101 in the fall, and ENG 101 course sections tend to fill up faster during summer registration (for what that’s worth).

ENG 101

The brief course description for ENG 101 is as follows:

**Course Overview**

“Composition as Critical Inquiry” (ENG 101) challenges students to develop a range of rhetorical and intellectual abilities. Students learn how to analyze the multiple dimensions and meet the multiple demands of a variety of written rhetorical situations. Students also develop an array of strategies to help them navigate different genres and writing situations. These strategies include: reading, brainstorming, writing to learn and think, drafting, research (both textual and empirical), giving and receiving helpful responses, revision, editing and proofreading, publication, and techniques for researching writing processes, including their own.

English 101 is taught both as a 3 credit hour course that meets 2 or 3 times per week and as an extended course (ENG 101.10), which meets 5 days a week and includes individual and small-group tutoring times. We also teach several other introductory writing courses:

- A 101 section specifically for Education majors
- A 101 section specifically for English majors
- A 145.12 which is an advanced introductory writing class specifically for Presidential scholars
- 101 “honors” sections, which are accelerated introductory writing courses for honors students

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1 See the course description sections for more information on the differences between ENG 101 and ENG 101.10.
Information about the Course Structure of ENG 101

- **Course Times**: ENG 101 is generally taught on a schedule of M-W-F sessions of 50 minutes, or T-TH sections that meet for 75 minutes. There are sometimes M-W sections that also meet for 75 minutes each. The courses are taught throughout the hours of the day, from 8:00 AM, through 6:00 PM.

- **Course Caps**: ENG 101 is capped at 23 students.

- **Number of Sections**: We teach approximately 70 ENG 101 sections during the fall semester and 50-60 sections in the spring semester.

- **Special Sections**: Special sections of ENG 101 include all 101.10 (see Specific Information for 101.10, Section 9 of the Instructor’s Guide). It also includes Honors Sections and 145.12, which is listed as a 145 course but in fact is an advanced introductory course for Presidential Scholars at ISU. It also includes ENG 101 Urban Prep, which is a special section of 101 designed for Education Majors.

- **Computer Classrooms**: ENG 101 courses are all taught in our computer classroom suite (STV 250). Some of the rooms are small, some are large, but all are equipped with laptops for students and instructors to use, and projectors that will project the screen of the instructor’s computer.

- **Alternative Meeting Spaces**: We do have space in the Writing Program suite (STV 129) for instructors to have class meetings that are “sans” technology. We only have one room, so scheduling space can sometimes be an issue, but if you are working on some kind of project or activity where you need more space and “non-digital” writing tools, please contact Maegan Gaddis, the Writing Program Office Manager, to reserve the room.

- **Technology Resources**: We do have some additional resources (cameras, recorders, podcasting tools, etc.) that can be checked out from the Writing Program. Please contact Maegan Gaddis, the Writing Program Office manager, for information about what’s available and how to reserve it. Ryan Edel, the Writing Program Technology Coordinator, can help you learn how to use these tools.

Categories of Knowledge Important to Teaching Introductory Writing Courses

ENG 101 (and ENG 101.10) are part of the general education program at ISU, and part of ISU’s “Inner Core” general education (Gen. Ed) curriculum. Therefore, there are certain aspects of this course that need to be “in line” with both university and state requirements. We feel that our genre/CHAT-based approach to composition and our focus on “writing research” are very much in line with the ISU Gen. Ed goals; however, the fact that we don’t require instructors to teach a “set
"syllabus" means that we need to spend some time defining what the course does and making sure that instructors can design their courses to meet these goals. More information about course requirements is available in subsequent sections of this guide, but below we’ll outline the general kinds of knowledge that we expect instructors to be focusing on in this course:

**Genres:** When we use the word “genre” we don’t mean that we teach a specific set of genres in ENG 101. Instead, we try to introduce the concept of “genre” as complex, showing how the kinds of texts we produce in any situation are mediated by context in interesting ways. One can’t, for example, produce a comic book without images or an academic paper without citations. We try to include a whole range of different genres in our ENG 101 classes and give students a chance to research and compose in different genres so that they can see how “genres-in-context” shape the kind of content we produce.

Because our students in 101 have not yet moved into their major fields of study, they may not be ready to study specific kinds of academic or workplace writing. Instead, our goal is to offer them a range of settings where writing happens “in the world” (including the world of school) and teach them skills for investigating and unpacking how different kinds of writing work in various environments.

**Rhetorical Strategies:** (These are ways of organizing or shaping texts, many of which have been named over the years. They are often called “rhetorical modes,” but that phrase can be confused with production/composition modes like aural, print text, digital text, imagistic, so we use the term, “Rhetorical Strategies.”) It’s important to remember that these strategies aren’t really genres of texts--there isn’t any such thing as an “argument genre,” for example; instead, they are techniques that can shape the nature of the text an author produces. For example, “Narration” is a rhetorical strategy that uses a “storytelling” kind of emphasis (good detail, descriptive language, and attention to temporality are often aspects of narration). However, techniques of narration can be used in a wide range of genres, from magazine articles to scholarly papers, to poems, to graphic novels. Learning to use these techniques is important, but it’s equally important to understand that the qualities of these techniques may change as they are actively used in different genres. (Note: see the List of Rhetorical Strategies in section 1.2 of this guide for a more extensive discussion of various strategies.) Instructors should avoid teaching these strategies as genres, but they are still useful terms for talking about tools for writing. For ENG 101 students, these terms may have been understood in other school settings as genres – so it’s important to talk about them as “strategies” and help students to see that while these strategies can be identified in a wide range of texts, learning to write in context requires much more complex thinking than simply learning a set of basic strategies.

**Modes, Media, & Tools for Production:** “Modes” refers to aspects of the presentation of a particular composition that can determine how a reader will use it (aural, visual, digital, alphabetical, etc.) Modes can overlap (for example, a website is located in a digital space and it can use alphabetic, visual texts and can also be aural [include sound]). Together, these terms are important because they help us to consider all the various elements that are involved--physically and conceptually--when we compose. We don’t want to get caught up in thinking about textual production in one dimension. So our discussion of “texts” in ENG 101 might include: 2-D pictures that could be painted or drawn with crayon; print texts that are printed out on 8 ½” x 11” white paper; print texts that are written with crayon; sound essays composed for the web, hypertext or
multimedia composed for the web or for distribution on DVDs, etc. Often modes of production are
determined (at least in part) by genres (one composes email electronically, usually using alphabetic
characters, because that’s what an email is) although perceptions about the mode of production
can change over time (for example, we now produce and read essays electronically, and this
changes how we understand the modes of production that can be used to compose an essay).

**Mechanical Skills** (grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation): ENG 101 is a particular place in which
we can learn about and discuss these issues. We don’t pretend to teach “right ways” of structuring
sentences. Instead, we try to discuss the ways that different texts can be structured (so visual texts
use a “visual grammar” that refers to the way we generally tend to look at and use images, while
alphabetic English grammar includes a whole range of knowledge about how to structure
sentences, paragraphs, sections, stanzas, etc.). We work to help authors identify the “grammar
kinds of things” that they need to know in order to compose in particular genres and writing
situations.

**Practical & General Problem-Solving Skills for Writing:** These skills can include: editing texts
for concision; expanding and revising texts to make them more colorful and descriptive; using
organizational tools--paragraphs, headers, bulleted lists--for clarity; signaling progression with
transition sentences, etc. The skills needed for different kinds of compositions vary, but we try to
identify the practical skills that are related to the different kinds of genres that we teach.

**Tools for Researching Information:** We encourage a range of discussions about and training for
finding, evaluating, and using source materials in creative (and appropriate) ways.

**Tools for Researching Writing Genres & Practices:** Through both writing assignments and
different kinds of class activities, we actively try to provide students with tools they can use to
analyze genre and writing practices, including their own approach to composing.

**Tools for Evaluating and Revising Writing:** Through different kinds of activities and assignments
we try to provide tools that help authors/readers to examine the writing of others and to look
carefully at their own writing--which is really a process of making the writing strange--so that we can
examine it clearly. We use these tools as a way to analyze performance and as a way to better
understand how we learn to compose.