WRITD (Writing in the Disciplines) Course Proposal

**The Writing Across the Curriculum Program:**

Courses proposed for Writing credit must clearly address the goals, criteria and Student Learning Outcomes stipulated by the guidelines for Writing courses, approved by the faculty in December 2015 and described in Appendix B of the Faculty Handbook (yellow pages; **https:/gustavus.edu/facultybook**). Relevant selections from the guidelines are supplied here. Faculty should acquaint themselves with the Goals and Criteria discussed in the full guidelines and structure their courses accordingly.

**General Expectations for WRIT courses:**

The Writing Across the Curriculum Program affirms that students can best learn the conventions of academic writing by taking writing intensive courses in multiple disciplines. In the process, they use writing to discover and construct new knowledge and to communicate their ideas to others. Courses that fulfill the writing requirement focus on developing students’ rhetorical knowledge, meaning their ability to analyze and act on understandings of audience, purpose, and context. Such courses also should contribute to students’ growth in critical thinking, that is, their ability to analyze a situation or text and respond by making thoughtful decisions grounded in reading, research, and writing.

**Specific expectations for WRITD courses:**

WRITD courses build on students’ existing writing skills but focus their attention on particular disciplinary conventions and research methods, as well as the forms and genres valued most within a given discipline. Taken together, all of the writing assignments in the course must count substantially toward the students' final grades in the course. Because WRITD courses require substantive writing projects and intensive revision cycles, enrollments should be limited to 20 or fewer students.

Courses proposed for WRITD credit should promote these Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students choose effective rhetorical strategies shaped by their appreciation for the purpose, audience, and context for the writing task.
2. Students use writing as a tool to explore ideas, assimilate new knowledge, and reflect on the purpose of their learning.
3. Students use writing to evaluate texts critically, and to create arguments that communicate effectively with varied audiences, while acknowledging the limits of their own judgments.
4. Students develop a flexible process for writing that includes self-reflection and strategies for responding to feedback, enabling them to draft, revise and polish written work effectively.
5. Students create written works that exemplify the structures, genres, and conventions of the discipline.

**Proposal:**

Date:

I. Course Information

A. Department:

B. Course #:

C. Course Title:

D. Name of Instructor(s); multiple instructors may apply for WRITD designation for a commonly taught course:

E. Has a copy of this proposal been shared with the department chair?

Yes No

F. Maximum enrollment:

The maximum enrollment cap for WRITD courses is 20. If the maximum enrollment for this class is less than 20, please provide a rationale.

G. Catalog course description:

II. Guides to disciplinary conventions

Although WRITD courses do not require use of a specific style manual, what discipline-specific writing conventions (MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.) will students be asked to use within this course? Will they be assigned a handbook of disciplinary models, such as *The Pocket Guide to Writing in History*? Please indicate the titles of any such ancillary material here.

**III. Writing Activities used in the course.**

As you develop your proposal, refer to the WRITD Student Learning Outcomes (above) and to the full description of the WAC program in Appendix B of the Faculty Handbook accessible from this link: https:/gustavus.edu/facultybook

**Please provide descriptions for the following elements of your WRIT course in the space below. Note: do not cut and paste unedited text from syllabi or assignment prompts, which places an undue burden on your colleagues who review these proposals.**

A. WRITD courses require students to search for at least some of the texts, data, artifacts, artworks, etc. that they will be writing about, or to generate their own data (through interviews, experiments, observations, composition, etc.). **In this process, students should engage in the research techniques used by scholars in this discipline.** In 50-200 words, describe one assignment or activity that will help students search for or generate their own data or texts **and discuss how this activity is typical of your discipline**.

B. WRITD courses should develop students’ ability to find, evaluate, and incorporate outside source material into their writing. In 50-200 words, describe one assignment that will require students to find, evaluate, and incorporate outside source material**, using the tools of this discipline,** into their writing.

C. WRITD courses should require students to complete one or more major assignments in stages, with revision cycles, before final grading**. The assignment should use the writing conventions and research methods distinctive to this discipline. The final product should reflect a form and/or genre typically created by practitioners of the discipline.** In 50-200 words, describe and example of such an assignment, including its revision cycle **– that is, the stages by which students will develop, refine, and present their work with feedback from instructors and fellow students.**

D. WRITD courses ask faculty to spend some class time engaged in activities involved in the writing process. In 50-200 words, describe a strategy or exercise you will use to engage students in the writing process during class. [**Samples of strategies, drawn from a range of disciplines, are appended to this document**.]

Submit your completed proposal to the Provost’s Office at the following email address: [courseproposal@gustavus.edu](mailto:courseproposal@gustavus.edu). It will be reviewed by the Writing Across the Curriculum director and members of the Course Approval Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

**Appendix: Strategies for incorporating writing activities into classes, from WRITD proposals 2016-17:**

Biology: I hold weekly discussions where we read examples of primary literature and literature reviews. Early in the semester and for about four consecutive weeks, students are asked to write a brief annotation of the week's article (3-5 sentences) at the beginning of the discussion. These annotations summarize the main points of the research paper, distilling the major relevant evidence, and citing tables and figures. Initially, it is hard for students to find the right balance of specificity without excessive detail. However, they improve substantially after they are asked to refer to those annotations during discussion, and then reflect on the initial quality of their annotation in the last 5 minutes of class after the formal discussion is complete.

Biology: I assign primary literature papers (approximately 5) over the semester with associated questions covering both scientific content and presentation structure. We go through these papers in class and I collect the written answers from students. One class session each week is dedicated as a 'lab lecture' during which we go over some of the results obtained that week in lab and preview what we are doing the following week. This provides an opportunity to talk about construction of figures, writing of figure legends and what to include in materials and methods, as well as other aspects of how information is often presented in a formal scientific paper.

Chemistry: We practice the process of critical analysis and discussion of experimental results in class on a regular basis. One example of this kind of class exercise is the "group meeting" presentation, modeled after a typical chemistry research group meeting. Lab groups present their experimental data to the class and discuss their interpretation of their results in light of the primary literature. We examine and challenge every aspect of the presenting group's data, interpretation of the data, and how clearly and accurately it is presented. I talk with the class about not holding back any criticisms, questions, or ideas, because our goals are to practice critical evaluation of scientific data and arguments, and to help the presenting group present the best analysis possible when they submit their written report.

Communications Studies: Low-stakes writing is used at every stage in the process of each assignment students write. Instructors start most class periods with a five-minute writing exercise where students identify where they are at in the writing process, identify challenges they are having with the assignment they are working on, and set goals to overcome these challenges. They then discuss their low-stakes writing in small groups, depending on the stage of the process they are in.

Music: Communication about an abstract art such as music requires a learned vocabulary. Since this course is also a course about music, one key element is to listen to music and then to discuss it intelligently. One assignment will follow an initial session in which the broad variety of musical elements is discussed (form, timbre, texture, melody, etc.). The assignment will then ask students to listen to a common piece of music and in a group forum (students could form small groups of 2 or 3) and describe, write down, and discuss what they hear. For example, conversation should use some technical language to describe the music and include reference to ideas such as "contrapuntual texture," "homophonic text declamation," "melisma," or any of the many various ways we can converse about music without simply saying "this music sounds happy." (This is not to dismiss the necessity of allowing discourse to note the "happiness" of a piece, but the stretch goal is to ask students to describe with some technical competence why the piece is "happy." Maybe the engaging motoric rhythms and repeated triadic arpeggiations convey a sense of emotional uplift; perhaps the predominance of basic harmonic patterns in the major key suggest simplicity; etc.) Students would share these descriptions with the larger group as well, and commonalities of observation discussed.

Psychological Science: Students present their writing to other PSY390 students [and] engage in peer review. One purpose of the exercise is to have students recognize the different audiences who will be reading their papers and that students should gear their writing to readers unfamiliar with the technical nature of their work. Having psychological science students who are unfamiliar with the specific topic read drafts of paper sections encourages students to recognize when their writing has become too technical or “jargon-y” and teaches them to explain complex ideas in simple ways. Students also see how their peers are tackling specific aspects of the paper and can learn from their example. Peer reviewers are asked to write comments on the papers and meet with the student writer to explain the comments. An additional benefit of this exercise is the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with fellow students in a way that creates a writing/research cohort within the classroom.

Religion: Frequently over the course of the semester, students will be asked to write timed responses to a topic or text during class, in which they must explore multiple possible answers or interpretations. A sample prompt would be, "Is Wisdom a divine figure or simply a literary personification in Proverbs 8? Spend five minutes answering the question one way, and then switch to the other position and write for another five minutes."

Scandinavian Studies: I use free writing activities to stimulate ideas and discussion, and given that this course is taught as a three-hour seminar, there will be ample opportunities for this. It is extremely important that students learn the art of film analysis, for example, but few can do this right off the bat. So we start with watching a scene together and then writing a page that consists simply of impressions and observations: How does the scene make you feel and why? What struck you about the people in the scene? What kind of environment is it? What is the mood? Etc. Then we can build on these observations to start talking about actual filmic conventions, i.e. how the filmmaker carefully constructs the film to create these impressions/moods.