

## **Project Distinctio**

### **9/8/2015**

The following course description for English Composition 3 was drafted and revised over a five-month period. It was developed by consulting 27 responses to the Project Distinctio survey, UCLA's Writing II requirements, the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition," and program and course descriptions from UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, University of Illinois-Chicago, Harvard, Princeton, Loyola Marymount University, University of La Verne, University of Redlands, and Claremont Graduate University.

### **English Composition 3 Course Description**

English Composition 3 is based on two fundamental premises: 1) that writing is a powerful tool of thought and expression, and 2) that well-crafted exposition and argument are the primary modes through which critical thinking takes place. Writing Programs faculty believe that the ability to write well-reasoned, college-level arguments is an end in itself. They teach English Composition 3 with the recognition that rigorous analytical reading, writing, and argumentation equates with excellence both within and beyond the university.

For many students, English Composition 3 is their first opportunity to participate in a scholarly community. The class encourages students to view writing well as an integral part of UCLA's culture of learning, as well as a long-term pursuit that contributes to full participation in civic life. Faculty engage students by offering them an intellectually stimulating occasion for writing and challenging them to do their best work, thus empowering them to write with confidence and independence in many settings.

In English Composition 3, students learn strategies for becoming rhetorically adept within the university environment, increase their control over style and structure, and develop their critical and analytical thinking abilities. Students learn to articulate interventions in existing scholarly conversations and thereby to contribute substantively to the creation of knowledge. To achieve these goals, English Composition 3 classes are designed as discussion-based and revision-focused seminars. In-depth reading is valued over breadth of coverage, and students compose and revise 15 to 20 pages of university-level prose per quarter.

### **Critical Acumen and Rhetorical Knowledge**

*Through practicing writing as a process in English Composition 3, students cultivate:*

- Independent thought, original ideas, and fresh insight;
- Intellectual creativity and risk-taking;
- The ability to distinguish fact from opinion;
- Skepticism as a mode of inquiry;
- Habits of thoughtfulness and reflection.

*In English Composition 3, students learn to communicate ideas persuasively by:*

- Defining a compelling question or problem that justifies a response;
- Crafting clear central arguments;
- Supporting main ideas with specific, relevant, and credible evidence;
- Identifying and using genre conventions of university-level prose;
- Internalizing rhetorical considerations about audience, message, purpose, context, and occasion;
- Appealing to the broadly-shared expectations of university discourse communities;
- Studying rhetorical choices made by other writers.

## **Skill-Building and Technical Awareness**

Students in English Composition 3 approach writing as a recursive process when they navigate invention, drafting, and editing using conceptual and linguistic revision strategies to improve their communicative effectiveness. In English Composition 3, the writing process is complemented by three other distinct but related processes:

### *Reading:*

Students learn to engage attentively with challenging texts (including new media texts), thereby developing sophisticated analytical and interpretive reading skills. When an individual class has a thematic focus, students primarily study *how* meaning is conveyed in texts on that theme, not the content of the texts per se.

### *Research:*

Students are guided in their exploration of UCLA library resources that help them formulate meaningful questions, evaluate their findings, and integrate other voices with their own. Students come to understand the rationale for academic citation conventions and apply them.

### *Collaboration:*

By contributing to group discussion and projects, students foster a strong intellectual community. By giving, receiving, and incorporating feedback, students learn to reflect productively on their own ideas and those of their peers.

In addition to enrolling in English Composition 3, students may take other courses in which they study the content and conventions of particular disciplines or how to write for business or professional purposes. Since English Composition 3 focuses on academic writing, however, students work toward:

Clarity, concision, and complexity throughout a sustained piece of writing;  
Coherent and logical organization at the paragraph level;  
Sentence-level control over diction, grammar, syntax, and punctuation;  
Voice that is fluent, energetic, purposive, and appropriate for a university audience.