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WRIT 101: Composition and Sustainability

Perhaps the most common definition of sustainability is simply “meeting today’s needs without jeopardizing the well-being of future generations” (Owens 1). The line “In every deliberation we must consider the impact on the seventh generation,” inherited from the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, has become a maxim when thinking of the aim of sustainability (it has even become the name of a company selling green products, Seventh Generation). “Economic development, social development and environmental protection – at local, national, regional, and global levels” have been articulated as “pillars” for talking about sustainability (qtd in Kates et al. 12). In other words, when considering sustainability, a focus on human rights is as significant as respect for ecosystems. We’ll be exploring concepts of sustainability, ranging from issues of social justice to restoration, with the hope that you’ll begin to consider how sustainability figures into your evolving worldview.

We’ll explore these issues in our writing assignments and readings as you develop your abilities to think, read, and write rhetorically to better communicate in the world. You’ll inquire into different personal, academic, and civic contexts and read, analyze, and compose in different genres. You’ll also further develop flexible reading, writing, and research processes to help you develop as an academic and civic participant. Much of your work will involve different kinds of collaboration, including small group workshops and discussions that will take place in class, in conference, and in electronic forums.

You might at this point be wondering why your composition class syllabus is focused on sustainability. This year, our Composition Program takes sustainability as a “big idea” for us to explore for a couple of reasons: first, we quite simply care about the environment and human rights but recognize that the enormity of such problems as global warming or banishing racism can seem too daunting for individuals and communities to change. We don’t feel we have the power, the wherewithal, or the agency to change the world. Yet we believe that thoughtful, committed individuals can make a difference, and this belief leads us to our second point – we see learning to write in college as a means of further educating you to be engaged readers and writers of the world we all live in and continue on your path of learning to be active, agile, and reflective learners. Learning to write in college often means considering where you stand in relationship to others’ beliefs, learning to work collaboratively and productively with others, and learning to critically engage new ideas and practices, and these skills and habits of mind are vital for practicing sustainability but also for being citizens of the world.

Course Texts/Composing Spaces

Ballenger, Bruce. *The Curious Writer*. 3rd Custom Edition for the University of Montana. New York: Longman. 2008.

This text introduces and explores the primary course content: the ways of reading, writing, and researching you will engage in throughout the semester. The subject matter of class discussions and assignments will be based on *The Curious Writer*. Please bring this text to every class.

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 4th edition. Custom Edition for the University of Montana. Boston, MA: Bedford's/St. Martins. 2009.

This text is a resource for everything from portfolio keeping, writing and thinking to MLA documentation to information about grammar and punctuation. You'll use it during the semester to help you compose polished prose and document sources appropriately. This text will be a reference you'll return to throughout your college career. This text also includes useful information about writing courses at UM.

Working Folder/ Final Portfolio

You'll be asked to keep an electronic/print working folder of all your writing throughout the semester, and, at the end of the semester, you'll construct a final portfolio that will include your four inquiry projects, selected drafting, and an introduction to the portfolio. It's essential that you keep all of the work you produce in the course, in electronic form and hard copy. You'll work with *Portfolio Keeping*, included in *The Everyday Writer*, to learn what it means to keep a portfolio in WRIT 101.

Electronic Readings

You may be asked to sign on to reserve or get online and read related articles or essays to supplement your other course texts. Be prepared to print these readings to bring to class.

Major Assignments

Expect to write and revise four papers and one reflective introduction over the course of the semester, in addition to other writing in and out of class. I will give you a detailed assignment sheet as we begin each of these major assignments:

- Profile (1,000–2,000 words)
- Personal, Academic Essay (2,000-3,000 words)
- Op-ed (700-1,000 words)
- Personal Essay (1,000 words)
- Reflective Introduction to Portfolio (500-750 words)

These projects will give you the opportunity to compose in a variety of genres for a range of academic and civic situations. You'll have opportunities to use observations and experience as evidence, as well as learn rhetorical strategies for composing effective arguments and conducting academic research.

You will have the chance to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry and drafting. You'll compose papers in and out of class, alone and with your small group. For some of your writings, I'll ask you to bring enough draft copies to share with your group or ask you to work electronically. *All major projects must be completed satisfactorily for you to pass the course.* I will respond to these projects with written comments to guide you in your composing process (called formative evaluation), but I will also mark them using a check system to help you know where you stand on a specific project – particularly if you are unfamiliar with portfolio assessment.

Common Policies and Procedures

Registration-related issues.

I will not sign overrides because it's critical to keep the composition class size small to support its rigorous writing and workshopping environment.

If you miss the first two class meetings, you need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll another semester. This is University policy. The reason for this university policy is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first couple of class meetings, and students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves. Note: The last day to drop a single class on Cyberbear for a partial refund is September 21.

Attendance.

More than three absences from a M-W-F class will compromise your grade. 6 or more absences from a M-W-F class will result in a failing grade. Here's the breakdown:

4th absence: final grade drops one letter grade

5th absence: final grade drops one letter grade

6th absence: final grade is an F

Here's the reasoning behind the attendance policy. Without attending class, you cannot perform your role as a student involved in learning, planning, inventing, drafting; discussing reading and writing; learning and practicing rhetorical moves and concepts; or collaborating with your instructor and classmates. Personal situations and required university events may arise that, on a rare occasion, make it impossible for you to be in class. Remember, however, that's why a few absences are allowed; please reserve those for emergencies.

I reserve the right to adjust the policy in cases of *significant, documented illness or emergency*. Please note that instances of poor time management on your part do not constitute extenuating circumstances. If you must miss class, you are responsible for obtaining any handouts or assignments for the class from a classmate. Make sure you talk with me in *advance* if you are worried about meeting a deadline or missing a class.

Participation. Participation includes coming to class or conference or electronic forums prepared and on time, taking part in class discussions (this involves listening/reading as well as writing/speaking, and electronic ones), asking questions, contributing your knowledge and insights in whatever form is appropriate, and striving to make all your contributions excellent. It also includes doing the required reading and writing for each class. Note: Please come to class on time. Lateness will hurt your grade because it is an unnecessary interruption to the classroom community and because latecomers will miss valuable instruction. Please see *Participation Grade Descriptors* for more information.

Late Work. Late work hurts everyone. If you miss a draft deadline, you've missed a crucial chance for feedback on your work. If you aren't ready with a response to a group member's draft, you're letting down someone who is counting on you for help. If you aren't prepared for class, you limit your own voice and contributions to the class and community of writers and readers. For all these reasons, *late work is unacceptable*. If you ever have a problem with an assignment, talk to me in advance of the deadline and you may be able to negotiate a special arrangement. Deadlines are not negotiable after you've missed them.

Academic Conduct. You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code (see <http://life.umt.edu/sa/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>). If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: "plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated. The appropriate use of sources is, however, one topic of study in this course.

Sustainability. In keeping with our focus on sustainability, we'll make efforts to be less wasteful with paper in class. To this end, please single-space all draft and homework assignments. I may also ask you to submit some assignments electronically. You are also welcome to submit assignments that are double-sided or re-use paper (just put an 'X' through unrelated text). As your teacher, I will double-side copies, try to give you electronic readings instead of paper readings, and be sure we use texts you print off. When asked to bring multiple copies for workshop, please do so.

Office Hours. Office hours provide us with an opportunity to talk one on one. You may drop in during these times or make an appointment with me to talk about any questions you have about your progress in the course.

Communication. I'm happy to talk with you via university email if you have a question about the course or an assignment. Please do not email me drafts or attachments, text or IM me unless invited to do so. I will respond to emails Monday through Friday within 48 hours.

Classroom Community. Community is important in a small workshop class; we will work together to create an environment that promotes collaborative learning and effective, thoughtful discussion. The student conduct code asks students to “respect the rights, privileges, and dignity of others” – these are important (even sustainable) ways to engage in class discussion, particularly when the topic might be provocative.

Please be sure to shut off cell phones ringers and pagers during class and conference to prevent unnecessary disruptions. Please try to refrain from texting during class, so that your focus can be on our classroom community for the duration of the class meeting.

Resources beyond the Writing Classroom. The Mansfield Library and the Writing Center are both excellent sites for researchers and writers to get additional support. You will be asked to participate in at least one session on library research and take a draft of a paper to the Writing Center for feedback from one of their tutors as a way to expand your circle of writing support.

Students with Disabilities. Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me after class or in my office hours. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator, so I can do my best to support you.

Grades

Final Grade

I encourage you to talk with me at any time to better understand my comments or to discuss your overall progress and success in the class. Success in this class depends on how well you meet all of the requirements and your willingness and ability to enter into the spirit of inquiry.

Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

1. Informal writing: 20%
2. Participation: 20%
3. Final portfolio: 60%

Informal Writing (IW). You will receive a grade on informal writing submissions based on the following grade descriptors (Note: Informal writing may take an electronic or text-based form.)

- 4** This writing is well-developed and succeeds in mastering new techniques and knowledges. The writing shows an engaged rhetor at work.
- 3** This writing has been done with considerable care and attention. It is developed and detailed.

2 This writing is acceptable. The writing shows some time and thought have been put into the assignment.

1 This writing is unacceptable. It may be unfinished, careless, or inappropriate to the assignment.

0 Student did not turn in any writing or tried to turn in the writing late.

Inquiry Projects. To give you a sense of the check system I'll be using, please refer to the following descriptors.

Check (v) A project with a check generally meets its rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for extensive revision. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for focused revision.

Check minus (v-) A project with a check minus meets the basic requirements, but would benefit from significant revision and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making. Written comments will elaborate on strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for radical revision.

Unsatisfactory (U) A project with a U does not meet basic standards, and requires extensive development and attention. An unsatisfactory submission may be incomplete or inappropriate to the assignment. Such a submission will receive a request to rewrite in order to receive teacher comments.

Grade Descriptors. To give you a sense of what constitutes an A, B, C, D, and F in this class, please refer to the following grade descriptors for participation and portfolios.

Participation Grade Descriptors for WRIT 101

A Superior participation shows initiative and excellence in written and verbal work. The student helps to create more effective discussions and workshops through his/her verbal, electronic, and written contributions. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, thorough, specific, and often provide other student writers with a new perspective or insight.

B Strong participation demonstrates active engagement in written and verbal work. The student plays an active role in the classroom but does not always add new insight to the discussion at hand. Reading and writing assignments are always completed on time and with attention to detail. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members are tactful, specific, and helpful.

C Satisfactory participation demonstrates consistent, satisfactory written and verbal work. Overall, the student is prepared for class, completes assigned readings and writings, and contributes to small group workshops and large class discussions. Reading and writing assignments are completed on time. In workshop or conferences, suggestions to group members

are tactful and prompt, but could benefit from more attentive reading and/or specific detail when giving comments.

D Weak participation demonstrates inconsistent written and verbal work. The student may be late to class, unprepared for class, and may contribute infrequently or unproductively to classroom discussions or small group workshops. Reading and writing assignments are not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, suggestions to group members may be missing, disrespectful, or far too brief and general to be of help.

F Unacceptable participation shows ineffectual written and verbal work. The student may be excessively late to class, regularly unprepared, and not able to contribute to classroom discussions or small group workshops. This student may be disruptive in class. Reading and writing assignments are regularly not turned in or are insufficient. In workshops or conferences, the student has a pattern of missing, being completely unprepared, or being disruptive.

Portfolio Grade Descriptors for WRIT 101

A Superior portfolios will demonstrate initiative and rhetorical sophistication that go beyond general expectations. A portfolio at this level is composed of well-edited texts representing different writing situations and genres that consistently show a clear, connected sense of audience, purpose and development. The writer is able to analyze his or her own writing, reflect on it, and revise accordingly. The portfolio takes risks that work.

B Strong portfolios meet their rhetorical goals in terms of purpose, genre, and writing situation without need for further major revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or style/ mechanics. The writer is able to reflect on his or her own writing and make some choices about revision. The writer takes risks, although they may not all be successful.

C Consistent portfolios meet the basic requirements, yet the writing would benefit from further revisions of purpose, evidence, audience, or writing style/mechanics (or some combination) and a stronger understanding of rhetorical decision-making involved in different writing situations and genres. The writer composes across tasks at varying levels of success with some superficial revision. The writer has taken some risks in writing and exhibits some style.

D Weak portfolios do not fully meet the basic evaluative standards. Most texts are brief and underdeveloped. These texts show a composing process that is not yet elaborated or reflective of rhetorical understanding related to composing in different genres and for a range of writing situations. Texts generally require extensive revisions to purpose, development, audience, and/ or style and mechanics.

F Unacceptable portfolios exhibit pervasive problems with purpose, development, audience, or style/ mechanics that interfere with meaning and readers' understanding. Unacceptable portfolios are often incomplete. A portfolio will also earn an F if it does not represent the writer's original work.

Evaluation Criteria for Portfolios

The evaluation criteria your instructor will be discussing and applying with you throughout the semester reflect the Outcomes Statement for WRIT 101, a document which identifies the goals you should strive for as an English 101 student. The following questions are those your instructor will use to evaluate your submission portfolio.

1. How does the portfolio demonstrate engagement in inquiry as a means of learning? In particular, can the student use strategies like exploration, explanation, evaluation, and reflection as inter-related means of inquiry?
2. How does the portfolio demonstrate focus on a purpose appropriate to different writing situations, including different audiences?
3. How does the portfolio demonstrate writing in multiple genres with an awareness of how genres shape reading and writing?
4. How does the portfolio demonstrate use of specialized language from the discipline of composition to support learning?
5. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's understanding and engagement in the collaborative and social aspects of learning? Can the student give and receive feedback on written texts?
6. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's appreciation of the challenges of communicating effectively across differences?
7. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's development of a flexible writing process?
8. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's knowledge and use of research and reading as processes?
9. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's knowledge and use of a variety of technologies to facilitate research and writing?
10. How does the portfolio demonstrate a student's knowledge and use of conventions for different genres, including documentation and control of features like punctuation, grammar, syntax, and spelling?
11. Does the student include required portfolio elements?
12. How does the portfolio demonstrate content knowledge and skills related to composition and sustainability?

WRIT 101 Fall 2008 Schedule (MWF)

No late assignments will be accepted. Please ask questions if you have them. If school is cancelled because of weather, please keep up with readings and writings as outlined in the syllabus. You will receive a detailed schedule of in class activities and homework at the beginning of each new unit. Please check with me if you have a question in advance about future assignments.

Beginnings MWF Schedule

Date	Class Agenda	Homework
M 8/31	Introductions: class, members, texts, syllabus In Class Writing on Syllabus Discuss expectations for college writing (12-16 EW)	Read Student Preface & Ch 1 CW, Write IW#1: do exercise 1.5 in CW
W 9/2	Discuss sections 5 & 6 (EW) Workshop writing habits	Read Ch. 2 33-54 CW Rd 105-112 EW Write IW#2: write about your reading behaviors when reading for school, pleasure, work
F 9/4	Discuss/workshop reading habits Create class working definition of "Sustainability" Discuss portfolios (1-7 Reynolds – last tab of EW)	Read Ch 3 CW, 69-75, 86 Write IW #3: write discussion sheet for ways of inquiry Bring in your portfolio storage system
M 9/7	Labor Day: No class	

Major Project Deadlines for MWF Class

Unit 1: Profile	Friday, September 25
Unit 2: Personal Academic Essay	Wednesday, October 21
Unit 3: Op-Ed	Wednesday, November 4
Unit 4: Personal Essay	Monday, November 23*
Note: this is the Monday just before Thanksgiving break. Plan travel accordingly.	
Final Portfolio	Friday, December 11
Portfolio returned	Final exam slot TBA: must attend