

# Rhetoric and WRITING I

UCCS Writing Program

# Language Matters

## **UCCS Writing Program**

*University of Colorado at Colorado Springs*



**FOUNTAINHEAD  
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## TO THE ENGL 131 STUDENT



Welcome to the UCCS Writing Program's first-semester course in academic reading and analytical writing. Writing faculty and program directors collaboratively developed your rhetoric and writing curriculum and designed this reader with its focus on *language matters* over the course of four years. Your placement into this course signals your academic readiness for college-level writing instruction, which reaches purposefully beyond the work you completed in high school. You will read and analyze civic and academic arguments to prepare you for the critical analysis of academic texts and the argumentative writing you will be assigned in your college courses. ENGL 131 asks you to invent writing tasks by establishing language relations (agreeing, challenging, qualifying, extending ideas and claims) with other writers and rhetors right from the start. You are given both the right and the responsibility for inventing your writing tasks, strategically negotiating form and content relations as contingent upon audience and context, and for following language conventions and citation standards across the disciplines. ENGL 131 writers move beyond the simple surety of formulaic writing to problematize the efficacy of the traditional five paragraph theme and the three-point thesis. Instead, you will generate substantive academic essays that are rhetorically effective and academically responsible. To succeed in the course, you should expect to attend class regularly, participate meaningfully in class discussion, consistently deliver your very best work, and take advantage of your instructor's office hours for supplemental support. Students who have completed this course before you consistently commended UCCS writing faculty for an engaging ENGL 131 curriculum, for effective instruction beyond the high school level, and most specifically, for requiring individual writing conferences.

## THE COURSE

### *ENGL 131: Rhetoric and Writing I* *Academic Reading and Analytical Writing*

**Rhetoric and Writing I** is the first course of a two-semester written communication sequence required of all UCCS students. The course introduces students to academic reading and writing processes. Students develop critical reading, writing and thinking skills through class discussion, the rhetorical analysis of academic and civic texts, and the writing of analytical essays. Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Emphasis is given to reading and writing processes as multiple and rhetorically diverse. Course content focuses on language theory and practice—*language matters*—as the subject matter of rhetoric and writing as a discipline. Students explore language theory and practice through diverse frameworks: multicultural language practices; literacy and language in theory and practice; the reading and analysis of classics of American rhetoric, and civic issues in language and technology. Students should understand that the course serves two complementary purposes—to prepare writers for academic reading and writing assignments at the university level, and to introduce students to rhetoric and writing as a field of study unto itself. Signature features of the UCCS ENGL 131 experience include: writing instruction in a computer-mediated classroom; low course caps of 16–19 students; extensive small group and whole class discussion, and required one-on-one writing conferences for all ENGL 131 students.

**Writing Assignments:** ENGL 131 includes four formal writing assignments: an in-class essay based upon academic readings, and three documented analytical essays. Writing-to-learn activities include journals, peer reviews, invention exercises and other in-class writing assignments throughout the course. Writing-to-communicate activities include computer-mediated exchanges and online peer reviews and chats.

**Reading Activities:** ENGL 131 incorporates critical reading activities as integral to academic work. Students read and annotate texts throughout the course. Course readings provide the context for generating writing topics for subsequent essay assignments and the source material for the documented essays. Class discussion emphasizes the close, critical analysis of these texts for evaluative aims.

**Oral Communication:** ENGL 131 incorporates discussion as a counterpart of academic reading and writing to enable students to participate as responsible members of a pluralistic society—locally, nationally and globally. Students develop oral communication skills through whole and small group discussion of academic readings and in the context of their writing conferences.

# ENGL 131 OUTCOMES



ENGL 131, **Rhetoric and Writing I**, at UCCS is aligned with the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Recommended Outcomes for First-Year Writing Curricula (*College English*, Volume 63, Number 3, January 2001). Students should expect reading and writing instruction in the following domains:

## **RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Students should ...

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences and rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure, and adopt a voice and tone appropriate to the situation
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Write in various genres, including personal, critical, analytical, and reflective discourse
- Acquire a basic rhetorical vocabulary (appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos, audience, situation, exigence, and recognition of argumentative stases)
- Employ rhetorical theory (vocabulary, principles and strategies) in the analysis of texts

## **CRITICAL THINKING, READING AND WRITING**

Students should ...

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking and communicating
- Read diverse texts which responsibly represent difference [gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation] as integral to the study of language theory and practice

- Read texts that address issues in rhetoric and writing as *language matters*
- Understand writing assignments as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate content and sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power through the reading and analysis of academic essays

### **WRITING PROCESSES**

Students should...

- Generate multiple drafts to complete a successful text
- Develop strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading texts
- Use later invention strategies to rethink and revise their texts
- Understand writing as a social process and use collaborative strategies throughout the process
- Effectively critique their writing and that of their peers
- Use computer technology throughout the writing process

### **KNOWLEDGE OF CONVENTIONS**

Students should...

- Format analytical academic texts according to MLA guidelines
- Employ genre conventions relative to structure, paragraphing, tone and mechanics
- Integrate ideas, cite course readings, and document the readings as warranted
- Demonstrate control over their written language, including syntax, punctuation, grammar, and spelling



## ENGL 131 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

ENGL 131 documented essays are recurrently evaluated across the Writing Program to ensure that students receive comparable instruction and meet program-wide standards for writing competency. Writing faculty use the following rubric to assess documented analytical essays as the standard genre of the course.

### ENGL 131 Assessment Rubric for a Documented Analytical Essay

Rate the essay for the following criteria. Use an HC for **highly competent**, a C for **competent** and NW for **needs work**. Finally, rank the essay as a total using the same range: NW, C or HC.

Criteria	Score NW C HC	Comments
1) Writer develops a context to ease the reader's entry into the topic. Writing task is defined: texts, authors and essential details.		
2) Writer clearly states analytical aim and remains focused on aim/thesis throughout.		
3) Writer selects effective evidence, details or excerpts to substantively support stated aim.		
4) Writer introduces and integrates evidence from the readings. Technical competence.		
5) Writer analyzes and interprets evidence in support of stated aim.		
6) Writer effectively organizes essay to guide reader through the development of ideas.		
7) Writer demonstrates control of language and may use language to enhance aim. Boundaries, agreement, rhetorical effect.		
8) Writer follows MLA conventions for formatting the essay, citing sources within the essay, and generating a works cited.		
9) Writer demonstrates understanding of the topic and offers insight beyond a reiterative account.		

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## GRADUATION

Maya Angelou

The following selection is from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). Angelou tells the story of her eighth grade graduation in Stamps, Arkansas, where she attended an all-black school. This event is tremendously important to her black community, and Angelou speaks tenderly of the rituals surrounding the event and her time spent preparing for it. But suddenly, amidst the joviality and pride of the graduation ceremony, Angelou is "overcome with a presentiment of worse things to come." This is the story of Maya's growth—the full recognition of and appreciation for her race, and an awakening to cruelty within the world.



## GRADUATION

*Maya Angelou*

The children in Stamps trembled visibly with anticipation. Some adults were excited too, but to be certain the whole young population had come down with graduation epidemic. Large classes were graduating from both the grammar school and the high school. Even those who were years removed from their own day of glorious release were anxious to help with preparations as a kind of dry run. The junior students who were moving into the vacating classes' chairs were tradition-bound to show their talents for leadership and management. They strutted through the school and around the campus exerting pressure on the lower grades. Their authority was so new that occasionally if they pressed a little too hard it had to be overlooked. After all, next term was coming, and it never hurt a sixth grader to have a play sister in the eighth grade, or a tenth-year student to be able to call a twelfth grader Bubba. So all was endured in a spirit of shared understanding. But the graduating classes themselves were the nobility. Like travelers with exotic destinations on their minds,

the graduates were remarkably forgetful. They came to school without their books, or tablets or even pencils. Volunteers fell over themselves to secure replacements for the missing equipment. When accepted, the willing workers might or might not be thanked, and it was of no importance to the pregraduation rites. Even teachers were respectful of the now quiet and aging seniors, and tended to speak to them, if not as equals, as beings only slightly lower than themselves. After tests were returned and grades given, the student body, which acted like an extended family, knew who did well, who excelled, and what piteous ones had failed.

Unlike the white high school, Lafayette County Training School distinguished itself by having neither lawn, nor hedges, nor tennis court, nor climbing ivy. Its two buildings (main classrooms, the grade school and home economics) were set on a dirt hill with no fence to limit either its boundaries or those of bordering farms. There was a large expanse to the left of the school which was used alternately as a baseball diamond or a basketball court. Rusty hoops on the swaying poles represented the permanent recreational equipment, although bats and balls could be borrowed from the P.E. teacher if the borrower was qualified and if the diamond wasn't occupied.

Over this rocky area relieved by a few shady tall persimmon trees the graduating class walked. The girls often held hands and no longer bothered to speak to the lower students. There was a sadness about them, as if this old world was not their home and they were bound for higher ground. The boys, on the other hand, had become more friendly, more outgoing. A decided change from the closed attitude they projected while studying for finals. Now they seemed not ready to give up the old school, the familiar paths and classrooms. Only a small percentage would be continuing on to college—one of the South's A & M (agricultural and mechanical) schools, which trained Negro youths to be carpenters, farmers, handymen, masons, maids, cooks and baby nurses. Their future rode heavily on their shoulders, and blinded them to the collective joy that had pervaded the lives of the boys and girls in the grammar school graduating class.

Parents who could afford it had ordered new shoes and ready-made clothes for themselves from Sears and Roebuck or Montgomery Ward. They also engaged the best seamstresses to make the floating graduating dresses and to cut down second-hand pants which would be pressed to a military slickness for the important event.



Oh, it was important, all right. Whitefolks would attend the ceremony, and two or three would speak of God and home, and the Southern way of life, and Mrs. Parsons, the principal's wife, would play the graduation march while the lower-grade graduates paraded down the aisles and took their seats below the platform. The high school seniors would wait in empty classrooms to make their dramatic entrance.

In the Store I was the person of the moment. The birthday girl. The center. Bailey had graduated the year before, although to do so he had had to forfeit all pleasures to make up for his time lost in Baton Rouge.

My class was wearing butter-yellow piqué dresses, and Momma launched out on mine. She smocked the yoke into tiny crisscrossing puckers, then shirred the rest of the bodice. Her dark fingers ducked in and out of the lemony cloth as she embroidered raised daisies around the hem. Before she considered herself finished she had added a crocheted cuff on the puff sleeves, and a pointy crocheted collar.

I was going to be lovely. A walking model of all the various styles of fine hand sewing and it didn't worry me that I was only twelve years old and merely graduating from the eighth grade. Besides, many teachers in Arkansas Negro schools had only that diploma and were licensed to impart wisdom.

The days had become longer and more noticeable. The faded beige of former times had been replaced with strong and sure colors. I began to see my classmates' clothes, their skin tones, and the dust that waved off pussy willows. Clouds that lazed across the sky were objects of great concern to me. Their shiftier shapes might have held a message that in my new happiness and with a little bit of time I'd soon decipher. During that period I looked at the arch of heaven so religiously my neck kept a steady ache. I had taken to smiling more often, and my jaws hurt from the unaccustomed activity. Between the two physical sore spots, I suppose I could have been uncomfortable, but that was not the case. As a member of the winning team (the graduating class of 1940) I had outdistanced unpleasant sensations by miles. I was headed for the freedom of the open fields.

Youth and social approval allied themselves with me and we trammed memories of slights and insults. The wind of our swift passage remodeled my features. Lost tears were pounded to mud and then to dust. Years of withdrawal were brushed aside and left behind, as hanging ropes of parasitic moss.