The Continuum of English Courses at Parkland College

The English Continuum: an in-process overview of teaching composition, reading, and critical thought at Parkland College

It takes a lot of preparation and focus to teach the courses we offer in the English and Critical Studies Department, but as we prepare to teach our individual classes, we need to keep sight of the larger program goals. No one teaches in a vacuum; what we do in our classes, where and how we lead our students through the reading-writing process, has a large and direct impact on how they will perform in their next writing class/task. Consequently, we need to be aware of our role in this chain, but we also need to consider the reading and writing instruction that comes before the courses we teach as well as what will be required of our students in the classes they take after ours; we need to consider the continuum of our students’ immersion in college-level writing, reading, and critical thinking; we also need to be aware that if there is failure at any level of this continuum, it will be more difficult for our students to succeed in not just future writing classes, but perhaps many of their other academic classes. What follows is a brief summary (taken from our course descriptions and outlines) of the basic goals and requirements of each of the major writing and reading courses in our department. These are the expectations that we must live up to.

**Department Teaching Goals**

- To teach writing process: (to systematically teach in every English unit) Invention, Arrangement, Style, Revision for a specific Audience and Purpose.

- To teach the reading/critical thinking process: Comprehension, Analysis, Critical Response.

**English 098**

- **Course requirement**: a minimum of 14 graded pages in journals or other writing formats (including 3 essays of 2 – 3 pages)

- **Course focus**: Essay writing with emphasis on paragraph focus and unity; fundamental understanding of grammar and punctuation.

- **End goal**: ability to (comfortably) write a 2 – 3 page essay.
CCS 098 (Critical Comprehension Skills)

- **Course requirement:** 1 novel or extended narrative, 8 – 10 reading selections (1 – 4 page articles, approximately 25 – 30 pages total). (May be revised to 18 reading selections in place of a novel.)
- **Course focus:**
  (a) Developing students’ metacognitive awareness through the reading of expository, persuasive and narrative material with emphasis on
    • identifying and understanding author’s key points,
    • using strategies for building a college vocabulary, and
    • articulating reader responses;
  (b) Exposing students to continuous reading of well-written, engaging material.
- **End goal:** ability to read and adequately comprehend a 2 – 3 page article written at a 10th grade level.

English 099

- **Course requirement:** a minimum of 16 graded pages in 4-6 essays
- **Course focus:** organization, development, flow, thesis; solidifying use of grammar/punctuation
- **End goal:** ability to (comfortably) write a 4 page academically-oriented essay

CCS 099 (Critical Comprehension Skills)

- **Course requirement:** 2 novels, 10 – 12 articles, 6 – 8 written summaries and critical responses (approximately 2 typed pages each). (The 16 pages of written responses may include specific critical responses to readings and essay-type tests.)
- **Course focus:**
  (a) Reading college-level material with emphasis on
    • active reading of expository, narrative (in both brief and extended forms), and persuasive readings,
    • developing analytical reading strategies for thesis articulation, major idea identification, and vocabulary expansion,
    • learning critical thinking skills in response to readings, and
    • summarizing of author ideas and articulating critical responses in writing.
  (b) Exposing students to continuous reading of well-written, engaging material.
- **End goal:** ability to adequately comprehend and apply critical thinking skills to college-level (English 101) material.

English 101

- **Course requirement:** 24 graded pages in 5-7 pages of 4-6 pages in length
- **Course focus:** critical analysis/engagement/reading of outside ideas and texts; sophistication of thesis
- **End goal:** ability to (comfortably) write 5-6 page critical papers
English 102

- **Course requirement**: 24 graded pages in 2-3 essays of 4-6 pages and one argumentative research paper of 8-12 pages in length.
- **Course focus**: research/documentation (MLA or APA)/specific attention to audience and purpose
- **End goal**: to be ready to (comfortably) handle any writing/researching situation for any audience or purpose.

Philosophy/Religion

Literature

LAS 189