Recommended Curriculum
English 12: Freshman English I
Department of English
Kingsborough Community College
CUNY

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Course Description
An introductory course in reading and writing emphasizing the development of ideas in essay form and an understanding of how language communicates facts, ideas, and attitudes. After passing Eng 12, students must take Eng 24.

This particular approach to teaching Eng 12 is themed around “Language”; more specifically, this curriculum invites students to reflect on their own experiences with language, view that experience in the light of several critical readings, and to engage in on-going important debates about language policy in this country.

Required Texts

One Anthology on Language (choose):


One full-length text (choose):


We advise you to use the guide to the 2009 Modern Language Association citation style available online at the Purdue Online Writing Lab. This reduces book costs for students and ensures that you always have an up-to-date source available for your own reference.

### How to Use this Curriculum

We’ve structured this approach to teaching English 12 around four different sets of readings and four major writing assignments. The writing assignments are designed to build on one another, following Lev Vygotsky’s notion of “scaffolding.” We implement Vygotsky’s concept both horizontally and vertically in this curriculum: we scaffold horizontally in that the four major writing assignments increase in complexity as a student moves through the semester; we scaffold vertically, within each assignment, in that we suggest pre-writing activities that help students begin to do the types of thinking, analysis, and writing that best prepare them for each assignment.

The curriculum is divided into three units, each culminating in a major writing assignment. For each unit, we’ve created a sub-theme that focuses on a particular aspect of the general theme of “Language.” We list suggested readings for each of the four units, including chapters from Gilyard’s *Voices of the Self* and essays from the anthology *What’s Language Got to do with It?* These readings are offered as suggestions to you, the instructor. You are not required or expected to use every single one of the readings listed; you are also not restricted to the readings listed. If you know of another short reading that is relevant to the sub-theme of a unit that you have had success teaching in the past, we welcome you to integrate it into the other readings from the required course texts.

In addition to the readings, we have included a description of the formal essay that students should be working on during each unit as well as a list of suggested “scaffolding” (i.e., low-stakes, informal writing assignments) that will help students “warm up” for each assignment. You are not required or expected to use every suggestion for scaffolding; we offer
these ideas and suggestions to help give you a sense of how many of us might approach a particular formal writing assignment in our classrooms.

You will need to create a syllabus and “course calendar” for your own class, following the general requirements and structure of this model curriculum. For each formal writing assignment, you should provide students with a written assignment sheet, detailing the requirements of the assignment, due date(s), and, possibly, criteria by which you will judge their essays (see “assessment,” below).

Please notice that this curriculum does not lay out a “day-by-day” approach. We know that you are already a strong and experienced teacher – that’s why we hired you! We want you to shape your day-to-day class sessions with the overall goals of the unit in mind based on your own knowledge of what works well in Freshman Composition classrooms. However, if you find yourself uncertain of how to approach a specific concept, writing skill, or assignment in the classroom, please do not hesitate to ask your mentor or the course directors for advice.

Course Outline

Unit One
Approximately weeks 1-4

Formal essay #1: The Personal Essay

This first formal writing assignment is a personal essay that grows out of a close, sensitive reading of the first few texts in the course. The purpose of this piece is for students to articulate and develop a connection they find between their (or their family’s) own experience/memory/identity and a course reading. This essay is equally grounded in the student’s reading of an assigned text and their own experience. This essay requires students to quote directly from the text.

Suggested scaffolding:

- “Memory trigger” informal writing assignments. These assignments encourage students to write out a memory (a physical description, a narrative account of an event, or another form) that has been tapped by any of the course readings. This type of assignment serves as a “warm up” for the type of personal, autobiographical writing that students will do in The Personal Essay.
• Writing a letter to the author of an assigned text expressing the student’s own thoughts and feelings about the author’s piece.

• “Top-quoting” informal writing, in which students quote a passage from a text that resonates with their own experience. Students will quote the passage and then try to tease out why this passage seems particularly meaningful for them.

Unit Two
Approximately weeks 5-8

Formal essay #2: Multiple Voices

In this assignment, students are asked to put two writers’ ideas into “dialogue” with one another. This assignment could take a variety of forms, such as: an essay in which students are asked to apply one writer’s theory to another’s ideas, a more creative dramatic dialogue in which students are asked to imagine a conversation between two writers on a particular topic, or perhaps a letter written in the voice of one writer to another writer focused on a particular issue. What is important is that students be asked to represent accurately and sensitively the positions, ideas and words of two different writers and to represent the ways those ideas interrelate.

Suggested scaffolding:

• Writing an informal letter to the author(s) of the work(s) the student wants to use for essay #2.

• Writing a “dramatic dialogue” between the two authors. In this assignment, students are asked to imagine and write out a hypothetical conversation that would take place between two authors. At this early stage, the conversation need not be focused on one particular topic; however, this dialogue may help the student discover the interesting areas of discussion between the two writers.

• Selecting passages from two different texts that seem to have some relationship. Students could copy out the passages and then explain the relationship they see between them. This could also be the basis for a meaningful in-class activity.
• In-class role-playing activities could help students come to understand the perspectives of other authors.

Unit Three
Approximately weeks 8-12

Formal essay #3: The capstone project

The capstone project for the course builds off of the two previous formal assignments. In this assignment, students are asked to write a position paper, in which they integrate 1-2 course readings with 1-2 independently researched sources. The research should serve to expand and better inform the student’s understanding of the issues raised in the essay. Students develop and present an informed position on an issue that is deeply related to the central theme of the course. If desired, formal essay #3 could be configured as a deep revision of formal essay #2.

Suggested scaffolding:

• Scheduling an information literacy orientation for your students. A librarian can come into your classroom, or your class can visit the library to learn how to find relevant and useful sources for their research. Contact Reabeka King in the library (718.368.5429) early in the semester to set up an orientation, or a series of orientations, for your students.

• Writing a “letter to the editor” in response to one or two texts in the course.

• Keeping a “research log,” in which students could summarize their research process, keep track of where they’ve looked for sources and what they’ve found.

• Organizing an in-class debate between different authors’ positions on one issue.

• Evaluating sources in an “annotated bibliography.”

• Identifying and analyzing passages from the researched sources that might be used in the formal essay. Students can quote the passage and explain: what it says, why what it says is interesting,
and how it relates to their own (or another writer’s) thinking about the issue.

**Suggested Themes for Units in this Curriculum**

- Gender and language
- Race/Ethnicity and language
- Technology and language
- Language in the media
- Language and Education
- Public/Civic language
- Bilingualism
- Language and Power

These are only suggestions. Please feel free to develop your own themes within Language for your units of English 12.

**Suggested additional informal reading and writing activities and assignments**

In addition to the suggestions of informal writing assignments that we have made for each unit, you will probably want to have students writing regularly in response to their reading. Students’ ongoing informal writing is an essential part of this curriculum. We suggest using some structure for this writing: a print journal, an online journal (via Blackboard), or another means of organizing students’ work. Following is a list of suggested activities, many of which could be done in writing by individual students or in the classroom by groups of students.

- Answering and/or creating focused questions about assigned texts.
- Explicating and/or critiquing specific passages from assigned texts.
- Summarizing the arguments of texts.
- Reflective writing through which students can focus on their own growth as readers, writers and learners.
- In-class free-writing.
- Open reader-response writing to assigned texts.
- Writing letters to authors or between authors.

**Teaching Writing as a Process**
Our department supports the predominant philosophy of the national Composition community toward how writing is best taught. We expect you to teach writing as a process in your classroom. The hallmarks of a process approach to teaching writing are:

- The belief that people learn to write by writing;
- Ample time to engage in pre-writing activities (both as an individual and in groups) to generate ideas, explore false-starts, and devise a plan for writing;
- Ample time to write drafts of essays, receive feedback (from peers and/or instructors) on those drafts, and do further revision;
- Engagement in reflective thinking and writing about one’s progress and writing development.

Taking all of these characteristics into consideration, there is still generous room for each instructor to tailor an approach to teaching English 12 that meets his or her own needs and honors his or her own experience teaching writing.

For a more detailed description of the process-approach to teaching writing, please consult the page entitled “NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing” on the website of the National Council of Teachers of English: http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/write/118876.htm.

Assessment

Their first semester teaching English 12, we ask instructors to participate in collaborative portfolio assessment. You will be assigned an assessment group with whom you will exchange your students’ writing portfolios at the end of the semester. This group will determine whether students pass or fail the course.

After the first semester teaching at KCC, teachers are asked to select the assessment model they prefer for their section of English 12. They could continue to use collaborative portfolio assessment or they could grade each formal writing assignment individually. Regardless of the assessment model used in the course, all instructors are asked to use the English 12 assessment rubric (see website) to evaluate their students’ essays.

Students in all sections are required to revise their formal essays. We believe that meaningful revision is more than simply correcting errors; instead, real revision involves rethinking one’s initial stance on an issue. In order to facilitate deep revision, it is vital that students receive plentiful constructive feedback on their writing and that they are allowed to revise their work before it receives a final grade.
Teachers should schedule some form of midterm assessment for their sections of English 12. This midterm assessment could take many forms: an essay test modeled after the final exam, a series of focused reading questions, a midterm grade on their informal writing, or even a reflective self-assessment.

There is a final essay exam in all sections of English 12. All new adjunct instructors are required to use the exam created by the English 12/24 committee their first semester of teaching. The weight of the final exam is up to the discretion of each instructor. Typically, instructors count the final exam as 10-20% of the final grade for the course.