

Teaching Honors College Writing II

RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

FYWP College Writing II learning outcomes:

<http://fywp.wiki.uml.edu/file/view/42.102%20Learning%20Objectives%202013.pdf/468792134/42.102%20Learning%20Objectives%202013.pdf>

Honors Program requirements:

http://www.uml.edu/docs/honors_faculty_teaching_tcm18-43216.pdf

Commonwealth Honors program Guidebook:

http://www.uml.edu/docs/Guidebook-2011-2012_tcm18-43224.pdf

English Department suggestions for Honors courses:

<http://fywp.wiki.uml.edu/file/view/Honors+English+Recommended+Practices.pdf/478110060/Honors%20English%20Recommended%20Practices.pdf>

SUGGESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND PRACTICES

There are lots of options for ways to enhance CWII for Honors students by involving them in the shape of the course and in decision-making about their work and the work of the class as a whole. The FYWP also encourages faculty to provide Honors students with opportunities to think about their writing process both in the usual sense of practice and on a meta-level in order to heighten their sense of purpose, intention and ambition. The suggestions that follow are the results of a series of conversations among faculty who've taught or who are preparing to teach Honors College Writing II.

Student designed learning

- **Open-ended assignments:** Faculty might leave more elements of Honors assignments open-ended, for example, not specifying length, but rather encouraging students to make an explicit decision and offer justification for the length that they chose, given areas of consideration like audience, breadth of topic, purpose in writing, etc.
- **Honors assignment laboratory:** Invite students to think about assignment design from the instructor's point of view. Perhaps ask for their feedback on or even invite them to help you build and assess an assignment that you'll give to other students. For a later paper unit in the class, when students are a bit more familiar with the research process and your approach to it, consider having students design the entire unit, from topic to readings to process to assessment.
- **Student group teaching:** Assign a group project in which students teach an entire class on a given set of materials, perhaps a rhetorical concept or a chapter of the Common Text. Require students to deliver some lecture material, a hands-on activity, and some type of assessment to see if their peers learned what they wanted them to. Ask students to reflect on their teaching and learning in light of this experience.

Individualized instruction

- **Pointed challenges:** Beyond the basic objectives for a given assignment, identify individual challenges (or challenges that apply to particular clusters of students) for each assignment. This might include issues like risk taking (in terms of essay structure, voice, use of multiple modes of argument, etc.) for those who tend to play it too safe, or the goal of finding and using more challenging sources for those who have handled readings with ease, etc.
- **Conferences:** Conferences with Honors students can be put in the students' hands. While most of us intend for students to do the preparation for and talking during all conferences, that intention sometimes doesn't pan out, especially when we're pressed for time. Give Honors students some guidelines for preparing for conferences, such as having them prepare a list of personal objectives for their time with you (possibly even as a brief, in-class activity), having them annotate their drafts pre-conference to identify questions they want to pose, asking them to write about how their conferences impacted their goals for their revisions, etc.

Research journals

Have students keep journals that track their process from start to finish on each assignment. This might include annotations of research sources, notes on readings, and reflections on decisions about what sources add to the paper at hand. Students will be able reflect on their experiences between essays with specificity, and to look back at what they did throughout the semester to assess their own accomplishments.

Creative assignments

Consider using creative assignments to augment the academic work that Honors students produce. For example, assign an image-curating project using Pinterest. Ask students to start by searching for images using a broad set of search terms, then to select a small number of more refined Pinterest searches that “springboard” from the original topic set. The search would provide a visual analog for the topic refinement process. By tracking and narrating the development of a research project initiated on Pinterest, students would use their creative abilities to perform one of the “meta-learning” investigations suggested for Honors CWII courses.

Peer response assignments

Have students adapt the peer response assignments as a group enterprise. Ask students to consider the learning objectives for the particular assignment and then craft criteria that address their concerns about what they need to accomplish given the particular assignment. Or have students conduct peer reviews outside of class, then use class time to group edit two papers projected on-screen to model feedback techniques. No matter how you structure it, peer-to-peer discussion and collaboration is a key element for community-building among honors students, and CWII should be a place for them to practice those skills.

Service learning

Honors students will grow personally and professionally when they participate in well-designed service learning projects—clearly linked to course learning outcomes—that call on them to contribute to their community through organized volunteerism.

Wiki editing

Consult with a research librarian about running a wiki-edit-a-thon or fact-checking workshop on the Common Text in which one or more honors sections could participate.

“E1” programming

Honors students are required to meet an Enrichment Requirement each semester, and they can complete these by attending “E1” events on campus. We’ve asked Honors Coordinator Beth Donaghey to keep Honors CWII faculty posted about upcoming events; if you see something coming up that will tie in with your course, suggest to student that they ask for Honors Program approval to use it as an E1.

Research colloquium participation

Encourage Honors students in CWII to participate in the annual Student Research Symposium. It might be an interesting assignment to have students look at the research that more advanced students in their discipline are doing and to write a synopsis and assessment of another student’s project.

SPECIAL CONCERNS FOR FACULTY TEACHING HONORS CWII

- Now that CWII Honors is required of all Honors students, we will see some students who do not perceive themselves as having a particular strength in writing. These students, in the past, would have opted to take Honors credits elsewhere. Be prepared for your Honors CWII students to represent a range of ability and interest in writing.
- Honors students who perceive themselves as skilled, successful writers can be resistant to thorough revision. It is critical for faculty in Honors CWII sections to emphasize the importance of revision for *all* writers—even the best professional writers—and certainly for all student writers.
- Honors students are sometimes prone to being grade-oriented; the potential fear of lower grades cases means that it’s important for faculty to build in incentives for intellectual risk-taking.