

UMass Lowell English Department
SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
TO FULFILL DEPARTMENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
IN LITERATURE COURSES

This document reviews the Department-approved learning outcomes for literature courses. It establishes a range of possibilities for the written assignments that faculty can use to measure students' progress toward those learning outcomes. Further, this document differentiates the types and extent of writing assignments expected in writing-intensive sections capped at 19 and in larger, lecture-style sections capped at 49. It also provides a guide to the Department's expectations for the amount of written work appropriate to 200-, 300-, and 400-level courses. This document is not intended to be proscriptive. These general and flexible descriptions are meant neither to impinge upon academic freedom nor to exclude other, important types of assignments and assessments.

The Department strongly encourages faculty teaching sections capped at 19 to include on the syllabus a paragraph describing the writing intensive nature of the course and how course writing assignments build toward goals for student learning.

200 level literature courses capped at 19 (writing intensive)

Key departmental learning outcomes:

- acquire close reading skills for engaging with texts
- express ideas in vigorous class discussion and formal presentations
- gain an appreciation and understanding of literary works and literary study
- practice critical thinking and analytical skills, including interpretation, summary and evaluation
- produce clearly written and well-argued papers in academic prose
- engage with critical discourse surrounding texts (some courses may involve limited projects introducing and reinforcing fundamental research skills)

Types of written assignments to evaluate student learning:

- informal writing (though not exclusively)
 - formal writing: multiple short papers
 - longer essays
 - limited research projects (scaffolded and closely guided)
 - quizzes (though not exclusively)
 - exams: in-class essay exams, take-home essay exams, etc.
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300 level literature courses capped at 19 (writing intensive)

Key departmental learning outcomes:

- explicate a text through close and careful reading
- produce clearly written and well-argued papers in academic prose
- communicate orally in formal presentations and informal class discussion
- articulate central course concepts
- identify and deploy key terms appropriate to the course
- engage with relevant critical discourse
- place course subject matter in broader literary or social contexts
- evaluate research sources for authority, accuracy, and appropriateness
- synthesize multiple sources in a research paper with correct and appropriate documentation of all sources

Types of written assignments to evaluate student learning:

- informal writing (though not exclusively)
- formal writing: multiple short papers
- research essays requiring exploration of primary and secondary sources
- extended essays engaging scholarly critical and theoretical texts
- quizzes (though not exclusively)
- exams: in-class essay exams, take-home essay exams, etc.

400 level literature courses capped at 19 (writing intensive)

Key departmental learning outcomes:

- explicate a text through close and careful reading
- produce clearly written and well-argued papers in academic prose
- communicate orally in formal presentations and informal class discussion
- engage with relevant critical discourse
- demonstrate knowledge of rhetorical, theoretical, and social functions of language
- evaluate research sources for authority, accuracy, and appropriateness
- synthesize multiple sources in a research paper with correct and appropriate documentation of all sources

Types of written assignments to evaluate student learning:

- informal writing (though not exclusively)
- formal writing: multiple short papers
- research essays requiring exploration of primary and secondary sources
- extended essays engaging scholarly critical and theoretical texts
- sustained, major paper suitable for conference presentation or writing portfolio
- quizzes (though not exclusively)
- exams: in-class essay exams, take-home essay exams, etc.

200 level literature courses capped at 49

Key departmental learning outcomes:

- acquire close reading skills for engaging with texts
- express ideas in vigorous class discussion
- gain an appreciation and understanding of literary works and literary study
- articulate central course concepts
- identify and deploy key terms appropriate to the course
- practice critical thinking and analytical skills, including interpretation, summary and evaluation

Types of written assignments to evaluate student learning:

- a mixture of formal and informal writing: essays, journals, open responses, brief reactions
- a mixture of graded and ungraded (check, s/u) written assignments
- quizzes
- exams: short answer, multiple choice, etc.