

Department of Focused Inquiry Shared Curriculum: UNIV 111, 112, and 200

Department of FI mission:

The purpose of this faculty and department will be to cultivate in all VCU students the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for collegiate and lifelong success through learning-centered experiences.

The VCU Compact:

In 2006, the VCU Compact pledged to create a shared undergraduate experience that enhances student engagement and learning, fosters a sense of community, and emphasizes the development of a set of skills essential for educational and professional successes and lifelong learning.

The establishment of the VCU Compact ensures all graduates have the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for lifelong success. The VCU Compact creates a University-wide shared experience for all undergraduates that focuses on the foundations necessary to enable and ensure lifelong learning. VCU will commit itself to a higher level of engagement between faculty and students while raising the performance expectations of the entire University community through this Compact.

Core Curriculum Goals:

Along with an emphasis on student-centered learning, the primary goals of the Core Curriculum are to

1. Improve students' levels of competencies in all skill areas;
2. Blend knowledge and skills from different disciplinary areas into one integrated experience; and
3. Encourage and promote student engagement in present and future learning.

Definition of terms:

Mission: A mission statement should explain why your organization exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the organization's essential nature, its values and its work.

Goals: Program learning goals are general statements about knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values expected in graduates of the program. Goals are written to align with the holistic vision of the mission. Typically, multiple goals are drawn from the mission statement.

Learning Outcomes: Program learning outcomes are clear, concise statements that describe how students can demonstrate their mastery of program goals. Learning outcomes should be thoughtfully developed in consideration of the mission and the goals of the program. Outcomes are more specific than goals, and there are usually multiple learning outcomes for each goal. They are statements of the knowledge, skills, and abilities the individual student possesses and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences (e.g., course, program, degree). [Click here for definitions From LMU Assessment Resources Page.](#)

Core Curriculum Goals	FI Goals or Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes
<p>Writing proficiency:</p> <p>courses provide students with substantive and sustained writing experiences to further develop their writing and thinking competencies.</p>	<p>In 111, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● generate both informal and formal written products for a variety of purposes 	<p>After 111, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● effectively summarize and analyze texts ● consider audience and purpose in one’s own and others’ writing ● offer reasons and evidence in support of a claim ● engage in process writing (drafting, revision, and editing) ● practice standard writing conventions in a way that does not obscure meaning ● reflect on experiences, texts, and class activities ● use inquiry to guide writing ● create an online presence appropriate to their learning community (This outcome treats “writing proficiency” as communication writ large.)
	<p>In 112, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● generate both informal and formal written products for a variety of purposes ● analyze and evaluate their own writing process(es). ● ground analytical writing in well-sourced evidence rather than only personal beliefs or cultural assumptions 	<p>After 112, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● effectively analyze and synthesize multiple texts ● shape writing to serve purpose and audience expectations ● transfer considerations of audience, context, and purpose across media ● generate research questions ● offer reasons and evidence in support of a claim while contending with other perspectives ● engage in process writing (drafting, peer review, revision, and editing) ● practice standard writing and citation conventions ● reflect on experiences, texts, the writing process, and class activities
	<p>In 200, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● continue to engage in writing as a process ● become more proficient in communicating the complex arguments of others ● develop and convey original ideas/contexts/applications using rhetorical strategies appropriate for academic argument ● recognize the need for and pursue further research ● recognize that argument can be conveyed in multiple media 	<p>After 200, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● articulate a reasonable and cogent claim ● utilize a variety of sources, source types, and perspectives to support claim ● continue to effectively synthesize multiple texts, including scholarly ones ● use appropriate citation/documentation ● address an audience appropriate to the project ● participate in peer review ● develop and implement writing process strategies ● consider the relationship between purpose and audience and make appropriate choices ● consider the relationship between form and function and what will be required to convey argument in a new medium ● understand and justify different media choices for a given rhetorical situation ● distill and convert the argument into a new medium ● use an online platform or other public forum to present the argument

Core Curriculum Goals	FI Goals or Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes
<p>Critical thinking:</p> <p>courses encourage critical self-awareness, helping students apply critical thinking strategies to foster more disciplined approaches to learning.</p>	<p>In 111, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● think critically about texts, ideas, and the elements of argument ● be attuned to the value of and consider diverse perspectives 	<p>After 111, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● generate relevant questions ● identify arguments within a variety of texts ● identify and critique assumptions and biases, including their own, and recognize the limitations of their own perspectives and experiences. ● analyze arguments and evaluate evidence ● formulate a cogent argument ● engage in analysis of a multimodal text ● reflect on the central role of these activities in academic culture
	<p>In 112, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● apply critical thinking strategies to analyzing and creating arguments, including academic arguments 	<p>After 112, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● generate relevant questions ● formulate plausible objections to arguments ● address counterarguments, acknowledging the importance of situating and evaluating one's claims-in relation to multiple perspectives ● evaluate new information as potentially supporting or weakening arguments ● challenge unconscious and institutionalized assumptions and biases and revise conclusions in light of evidence ● reflect on the central role of academic inquiry in academic culture
	<p>In 200, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participate in inquiry-focused activities in an inclusive community of learners ● develop, exercise, and sustain a habit of rigorous inquiry ● become more proficient in analyzing, understanding, and participating in argumentation ● engage in critical reflection about work in process 	<p>After 200, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand the structure of argument and identify its elements in texts ● reflect on how argument transcends any particular project ● reflect on how diverse research and the perspectives of others can inform their own experiences and arguments

Core Curriculum Goals	FI Goals or Objectives (from syllabi)	Course Learning Outcomes
<p>Information fluency:</p> <p>courses help students navigate library-related services (online and on-site) as well as evaluate the legitimacy of sources of information.</p>	<p>In 111, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● critically read and respond to texts 	<p>After 111, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● practice critical reading skills ● classify information as relevant or irrelevant, organize information, and prioritize information ● identify and access service points in Cabell Library in person and online in order to seek assistance and academic resources ● demonstrate a habit of citation in written work and oral presentation, including sources of images and video ● demonstrate familiarity with the Honor Code ● identify basic elements of citation (author, title, source, date) ● employ the basic format and mechanics of citations (in text and list at end) ● consult and utilize VCU Writes! and other trusted online writing resources to resolve citation questions
	<p>In 112, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● practice appropriate information retrieval and source evaluation ● critically read and respond to sources 	<p>After 112, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demonstrate critical reading skills ● find sources using VCU Libraries Search to advance research goals ● distinguish between different formats of information ● distinguish between scholarly, substantive, and popular sources ● assess credibility of sources ● classify sources as relevant or irrelevant to research goals ● demonstrate appropriate citation of sources (in text and list at end) ● develop their habits of citation, understanding citation as part of the writing and research process. ● show knowledge of a variety of citation systems with differing expectations. ● demonstrate increasing accuracy in format and mechanics of citation. ● avoid distortions and misuse of material (cherry-picking, misrepresentations)
	<p>In 200, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● locate topic-relevant information using VCU Libraries resources and the free web ● critically evaluate the quality and suitability of information ● explore academically rigorous and diverse work in evolving communication platforms 	<p>After 200, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● formulate an effective research question ● design and implement an effective research strategy ● recognize that source material can be found through a variety of communication platforms ● locate, assess, and responsibly use source material that represents multiple perspectives ● differentiate between types of sources ● utilize proper documentation ● continue to develop critical reading strategies and engage with increasingly complex sources

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<p>Ethical and civic responsibility:</p> <p>students reflect on their culturally-inherited values, thinking critically about the relationship between these values and global context</p>	<p>In 111, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● explore principles of ethical and civic responsibility ● analyze ethical problems and viewpoints ● explore the role of one’s own beliefs and values in making ethical judgments 	<p>After 111, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● assess their own values ● recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings ● identify the social contexts of ethical problems ● acknowledge alternate viewpoints, values, and lived experiences ● use ethical frameworks to evaluate human conduct and/or institutions ● make informed decisions regarding issues of privacy online
	<p>In 112, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● consider multiple ethical viewpoints ● apply methods of ethical reasoning to texts and arguments 	<p>After 112, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● identify and assess ethical questions, even when the given issue is not overtly ethical ● apply different approaches to ethical questions ● represent opposing viewpoints accurately and address them fairly ● evaluate the ramifications of potential courses of action ● formulate an ethical claim based on evidence and critical reflection
Core Curriculum Goals	FI Goals or Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes
<p>Quantitative Literacy:</p> <p>students have the ability to understand and use numbers and data analyses in everyday life and in the workplace.</p>	<p>In 111, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● explore how quantitative information may be used as evidence 	<p>After 111, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand how numerical and statistical data are represented in a variety of ways (e.g. charts, graphs, statistics, polls, etc.) ● pose questions about numerical and statistical data
	<p>In 112, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● evaluate quantitative information used as evidence 	<p>After 112, students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand how numerical and statistical data can support arguments ● analyze and evaluate statistical information represented in a variety of ways (e.g. charts, graphs, statistics, polls, etc.)

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Collaborative Learning	In 111, students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● work collaboratively on activities and projects ● explore the value of adding the experiences and beliefs of others to one's own thinking in order to gain a wider and-more informed perspective 	After 111, students will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ask and respond to questions of peers and instructor ● work on group assignments or classroom activities ● recognize how an online platform can facilitate collaborative learning
	In 112, students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● effectively collaborate on activities and projects, while incorporating multiple perspectives ● provide peer response and participate in group feedback 	After 112, students will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● work on a group assignment or project ● reach a shared understanding of what needs to be done and consider how to delegate tasks ● reflect upon group responsibilities and individual responsibilities within the group ● engage in online collaboration
Core Curriculum Goals	FI Goals or Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes
Oral communication: courses provide students with opportunities to express and develop their oral capabilities.	In 111, students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participate in whole class and small group discussion ● participate in a-respectful exchange of ideas among diverse perspectives, as members of an inclusive classroom ● build the oral communication skills essential for academic work and life 	After 111, students should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● contribute verbally to class activities and discussions ● share views or ideas respectfully with others ● practice verbal and nonverbal communication skills (eye contact, utterances, dress, time, posture, rate, volume, etc.) ● practice active listening by offering constructive feedback
In 112, students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● present their ideas orally in formal and informal contexts ● facilitate and promote respectful exchange of ideas among diverse perspectives, as members of an inclusive classroom 	After 112, students should be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● take a leadership role in class ● demonstrate competency in verbal and nonverbal communication skills (confidence, eye contact, utterances, dress, time, posture, rate, volume, etc.) ● shape communication to conform to academic and professional expectations ● generate appropriate responses to others' contributions 	

Shared Program Writing and Research Assignments (non-negotiables)	
111	<p>UNIT 1: A Reflective and/or Experiential Narrative that may incorporate observational evidence (750-1000 words).</p> <p>UNIT 2: A piece of writing that puts textual materials (at least one of which is a written text) in conversation and engages in summary, evaluation, and analysis (1000-1250 words).</p> <p>UNIT 3: A piece of writing that makes a claim and that incorporates multiple outside texts (1000-1500 words).</p>
112	<p>UNIT 1: A multimodal composition that incorporates analysis or experiential narrative.</p> <p>UNIT 2: Analytical writing which summarizes, analyzes, and synthesizes multiple outside sources (minimum of 1000 words).</p> <p>UNIT 3: Ethical Reasoning Argument (1250-1750 words) which incorporates research.</p>
200	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An essay of 1400 - 1750 words, in which students will create an argument (critical analysis, inquiry defense, or similar essay) about a text/topic that will culminate in or lead to formation of a research question. <i>In connection with this assignment, students should analyze and discuss at least three shared class texts and be reintroduced to and use shared vocabulary on argument.</i> 2. Organized evidence of the research process that informs or responds to a research question and concludes in a synthesis assignment (print and/or visual). <i>During the research process, students should:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>consult no fewer than 15 sources</i> • <i>provide further evidence of the research process for no fewer than eight sources</i> • <i>synthesize eight sources</i> 3. An argumentative researched essay with a minimum of 3500 words based on the research question established early in the semester. <i>This paper must draw on no fewer than eight sources, and three of those must be scholarly. All students must participate in peer review.</i> 4. An argument, based on research, that is shared in a public forum and reflects consideration of multiple modes. 5. A reflective letter with a minimum of 1000 words in which students explain their process (throughout course) and/or think critically about the conversion of the argument into a new form. Additional research is not required.
Shared Program Oral Assignments (non-negotiables)	
111/112	A minimum of two oral presentations are required in all sections of UNIV 111 and UNIV 112. Timing and format of oral presentations are up to the individual instructor, but one presentation should be a group presentation, and one should be an individual presentation.
Other Non-negotiables	
111/112	Students should be assigned a minimum of 3 readings per semester from the Custom Textbook, and course planning should involve the Common Book reading in the fall and the Theme Read in the spring.
111/112 & 200	<p>When teaching argumentation, please use the basic terminology outlined in “Grounds for Argument” in the “Skills” section of VCU Writes).</p> <p>When teaching citation systems, please make clear to students that these systems are discipline-specific, and that they will be asked to use different citation systems in future classes. For APA and MLA style guidelines, see the Citation Guide in VCU Writes.</p>

Definitions

Composition is said to fall into four basic types or categories (sometimes called modes): **expository** (informative), **descriptive** (records observation, sets a scene), **argumentative** (makes an explicit case, seeks to persuade the reader), and **narrative** (tells a story). Often these modes appear together by turns in a single piece of writing; the **essay** is a genre especially well-suited to accommodating all at once.

That is, in part, because definition of the **essay** is historically troubled. The tradition of the **essay** includes both **informal** (tends to personal topics, usually in narrative mode) and **formal** (tends to impersonal topics, usually in expository and/or argumentative/persuasive mode) structures. The **formal essay** leans toward the classic argument, with a thesis, evidence, and analysis of the significance of one to the other. **Informal essays** are less concerned with this sort of explicitly structured argument, though they frequently do contain arguments—implicit *and* explicit. Except in the case of the Ethical Reasoning Argument at the end of UNIV 112, and the Inquiry Defense/Critical Analysis and Argumentative Researched essays in UNIV 200, your Shared Program Writing Assignments *may or may not take the shape of an essay, but they should conform to parameters noted in the Shared Curriculum document and outlined here.*

Multimodal compositions, as defined by Selfe and Takayoshi, are “texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound.” For our purposes multimodal compositions must include written or verbal language and at least one other communicative mode. Students engaged in multimodal work will develop the understanding that meaning is not constructed solely through language.

Exposition is essentially what they teach in the younger grades—hence the 4th grade book report on Arkansas that relates the state bird and principal exports. Often research-based writing, even in the academy, is called “expository,” though it is often, in fact, argumentative in the sense that it presents a hypothesis or thesis and proceeds to prove (or disprove) it.

We should take “**Experiential Narrative**” to mean a composition based on the student's experience and/or observation (**descriptive**) that tells a non-fiction story (**narrative**), one where students select meaningful and significant information about their experience/observation that is, interesting to the reader and structured in an intentional and appropriate manner (i.e., the story has a beginning, middle, and end). Similarly, a “**Reflective Narrative**” would consider the larger context, meaning, and implications of an experience (see Branch below). A “**Narrative**” does not necessarily take the shape of an essay, but it does take the shape of a story. Included in this category could be the case history, the feature article, the observational analysis, or the personal essay.

We should understand “**Ethical Reasoning Argument**” (UNIV 112) as a formal essay that employs ethical reasoning and a synthesis of reliable sources to make an argument. Likewise, the “**Argumentative Researched Essay**” (UNIV 200) draws on a synthesis and analysis of research material to make an explicit, structured argument.

According to the FI Shared Curriculum, faculty should design writing assignments to involve students in applying the skills of Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis, and/or Ethical Reasoning (depending on the course and unit or focus). After surveying the faculty and participating in its own discussions, the Curriculum Committee suggests the following definitions for these terms: **Analysis** entails the ability to break down material into its constituent parts and to understand the interplay among the parts; **Evaluation** is the making of judgments using a set of criteria or against a designated standard; **Synthesis** involves making an observation or taking a position based on analysis and evaluation of multiple sources (possible examples of writing assignments focusing on synthesis: a literature review, a rhetorical analysis, or an annotated bibliography with an introduction, conclusion, or argument proposal). **Ethical Reasoning** interrogates and evaluates human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own values and the social context of problems, to identify ethical issues in a variety of settings, to apply different approaches to ethical questions, and to consider the ramifications of potential courses of action.

Finally, “**Critical Reading Skills**” are activities and processes applied to texts in order to enhance comprehension and lead to critical thinking about the ideas and arguments presented. These activities and processes include annotating texts, defining unfamiliar vocabulary, summarizing ideas, identifying main claims, audience, and purpose, evaluating evidence, identifying assumptions, identifying counterarguments and rebuttals, etc.

Definition Sources:

Branch, W.T., Jr., and A. Paranjape. “Feedback and Reflection: Teaching Methods for Clinical Settings,” *Academic Medicine*, 77.12 (December 2002): 1185.

“Ethical Reasoning.” AACU Ethical Reasoning Value Rubric. AACU.ORG <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/ethicalreasoning.pdf>

Holman, C. Hugh, and William Harmon, eds. *A Handbook to Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1992.

Selfe, Cynthia and Pamela Takayoshi. “Thinking about Multimodality” from *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers*. Cynthia Selfe, ed. New York: Bedford St. Martin, 2007.