Writing-Attentive Courses: Guide to the W2

Students are required to complete three progressively more advanced writing-attentive courses: the W1, W2, and W3. The First-Year Seminar and Writing Committee approves W1 and W2 courses; individual departments and programs oversee the guidelines for the W3, which for most students is the senior thesis. The FYS/W Committee has established five principles as the foundation of W1 and W2 courses:

1. Writing is taught, not just assigned.
2. Writing assignments of varying scope or genre are a significant portion of the coursework.
3. Students have multiple opportunities to revise their writing.
4. Faculty members give feedback on writing, commenting on rhetorical issues in addition to content.
5. Research skills and scholarly citation practices are taught, not just assigned.

In addition to these broad pedagogical principles—which underlie specific recommendations at the W1 and W2 levels—faculty have agreed on a shared commitment to specific learning goals for students in writing courses. These learning goals fall under the categories of Inquiry, Argument, Evidence, Organization, and Style. Although the committee does not expect that each individual learning goal will be explicitly addressed in a writing-attentive course, we anticipate that the day-to-day pedagogies of a W1 or W2 course will be logical places to integrate discussions, exercises, and assignments that might address multiple goals as appropriate throughout the semester.

The W2

W2 courses continue the work of the W1 with instruction in writing more clearly focused on the questions at issue in particular fields and with greater expectations of sophistication of idea and clarity of expression. Some W2 courses teach students how writing furthers scholarship and learning within a particular field; they may teach skills useful for writing in upper-level courses, and for writing the senior thesis. Other W2 classes may focus on developing students’ ability to be flexible and versatile writers by teaching new genres or forms, preparing students for a variety of writing in their education or careers beyond Bates. Thus throughout the curriculum, W2 courses introduce a range of genres and writing conventions. While only one W2 course is required, students are encouraged to take multiple W2 courses to deepen and widen their thinking and writing abilities. These W2 classes may be taken in any discipline or program to satisfy the requirement. Some majors may include a required W2.
Further Explanation of the W2

The W2 course encourages more sophisticated practice of the skills first introduced to students in the W1 course under the learning objectives of Inquiry, Argument, Evidence, Organization, and Style. Examples of higher-level goals in each category that might be appropriate objectives for a W2 include the following:

- **Inquiry**: Independently create a question that drives research and writing; decide on the best genre and medium for approaching a particular audience and purpose

- **Argument**: Construct, support, and defend an argument appropriate for the scholarly approach being taken; understand alternative terminology for “argument” and “thesis” within various disciplines or genres (for example, a policy brief, an informative essay, or a literary journalism piece)

- **Evidence**: Show a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the kinds of support and source materials deemed credible within a discipline—making choices, for example, among primary and secondary, text-based and data-driven, or print and multimedia sources

- **Organization**: Understand different organizational approaches and choose the one that is best for the purpose at hand; recognize different approaches to organization in different media (such as papers, presentations, and academic posters)

- **Style**: Use fluid and sophisticated prose, showing an appreciation for tone and diction appropriate to the discipline, genre, and medium.

Learning objectives such as these can be achieved in a wide variety of ways in W2 courses built on five consistent pedagogical principles:

1. **Writing is taught, not just assigned.** Some class time is devoted to discussion of the writing process and craft, practical exercises, or workshops that teach discipline- or assignment-specific writing concepts and skills.

2. **The W2 offers a variety of writing assignments—varying, for example, in purpose, genre, sequencing, and complexity.** A W2 course asks students to take on several different assignments, or one substantial assignment with components scaffolded across a semester, equaling approximately twenty to twenty-five pages of finished prose. (A course that assigns one large paper without stages for feedback and revision would not meet the expectations of a W2.) W2 courses are also appropriate venues for encouraging writing in different genres or for different media—such as grant proposals, web pages, print publications, conference posters, and creative approaches to writing—as well as for incorporating formal and informal oral presentations.
3. **W2 courses include significant revision and rewriting opportunities.** When taught as part of the scholarly writing process, **revision** allows students to revisit their ideas and rethink their rhetorical choices; feedback from readers (whether faculty, peers, writing assistants, or Writing Specialists) is key to guiding this rethinking. Students might undertake **revision** of one part of an assignment or of an entire draft, or have opportunities for **rewriting**. Students should be reminded of the differences between revising and **editing** and understand the importance of each in the writing process.

| **Revision** | A student’s rethinking of his or her own work in response to feedback, prior to receiving a grade |
| **Rewriting** | A student’s rethinking of his or her work subsequent to receiving a grade, with an opportunity to improve that grade |
| **Editing** | Attention to style, diction, grammar, and other conventions at any stage of the writing process, whether in response to feedback or through the student’s careful re-reading of his or her own work |

4. **Students receive feedback on multiple assignments from faculty and peers; this feedback focuses on rhetorical issues (such as argument, evidence, and style) in addition to content.** Revision and feedback might address all or part of a writing project (for example, feedback on and revision of an introduction, an outline, or a bibliography, as well as on early full drafts). Courses with large enrollment size (more than 20 students in a writing-attentive course) might incorporate instructor feedback on some components and assignments with feedback from peers on others. Feedback on an assignment that does not include a required revision should offer advice that the student can apply to subsequent writing tasks.

5. **The W2 course deepens and broadens students’ understanding of research and writing as modes for creating and communicating knowledge.** In the W2, students strengthen their skills with the research and writing process through assignments and class dialogue that encourage them to ask, research, and answer questions of interest and significance.
Learning Objectives for Writers

By the end of four years at Bates, and after completing the W1-W2-W3 requirement, students should have mastery or working knowledge of most, if not all, of these writing-related skills:

**Inquiry**
1. Understand the kinds of questions scholars ask in pursuit of different kinds of discovery (analytic, creative, or scientific inquiry, for example)
2. Craft questions worthy of inquiry
3. Respond to texts critically and thoughtfully
4. Identify an audience for an assignment
5. Understand that purpose and audience will shape the way they present their ideas
6. Ultimately, recognize that writing, thinking, and research are ongoing processes and become accustomed to rethinking and deepening their ideas

**Argument**
1. Think about the ongoing conversation their work is entering and the way in which they enter that conversation
2. Recognize when argument is the appropriate mode for a particular project and what alternative options and genres exist
3. Understand alternative terms used for “argument” and “thesis” within certain disciplines and genres (such as “problem,” “hypothesis,” or “creative concept”)
4. Develop a question or position, articulated as a thesis statement or guiding idea
5. Use evidence to test, support, and advance an argument

**Evidence**
1. Read and evaluate sources critically to understand a text’s argument and to formulate their own position about that argument
2. Understand the different types of evidence recognized as authoritative by various disciplines
3. Integrate their own ideas and work (such as experiments or field research) with the ideas and words of others in the field
4. Choose appropriate sources to support their own arguments, both print sources and sources in other media
5. Understand the value of fairly presenting and acknowledging support for an opposing viewpoint
6. Acknowledge and articulate the limitations of evidence
7. Use time efficiently while researching
8. Mine sources for further evidence
9. Have a command of larger research horizons (interlibrary loan or field research, for example)

**Organization**
1. Understand that thinking must be organized in order to communicate effectively with an audience
2. Be able to identify different organizational patterns, recognize the way in which their choice of organizational pattern is informed by purpose and audience, and draw upon these patterns as models for their writing
3. Understand the ways in which various components of organization (such as introductions, conclusions, paragraphs, transitions, and disciplinary-specific sections) guide the reader and strengthen an argument or main point

**Style and Conventions**
1. Appreciate the careful crafting of language, whether in traditional academic style or in creative expression
2. Understand that different disciplines have different stylistic conventions and understand the rationale behind the different conventions
3. Become more adept at presenting ideas in a variety of modes, such as academic papers, oral presentations, and online and other media, and understand the strengths and limitations of these modes
4. Be aware of their audience’s conventional expectations (diction, style, citations, etc.) for a particular project
5. Understand proper ways to reference and acknowledge others’ work
6. Become more facile with concision, fluency, and variety of sentence structure
7. Acquire self-editing skills that improve writing’s clarity
8. Understand common conventions of punctuation, grammar, and mechanics