



Writing at GCC

GCC is a place where you have the opportunity (and space) to explore ideas and identify your own values, passions, and curiosities. It's a place to stretch and challenge your *intellectual self* – to discover more about *how* you think and *what* you think (which might not always be the same as *what you've been told* to think).

Many of your courses will be highly complex, demanding extraordinary time and engagement. Whether you're learning more about the subjects you love or those that are “not your best,” most all of your courses will ask you to read, write, and communicate with clarity, originality, and power. Your English courses aim to reinforce what you've already mastered and, most of all, to provide you with the additional skills and knowledge you'll need to feel confident when facing the demands of your ultimate aspirations and goals.

The English composition courses at GCC are designed to give you practice in essential moves and strategies associated with scholarly writing. As we all know, effective communication and strong writing skills are not only the core of your academic work; they are central to success in just about any career or profession.

We also believe that strong reading and writing skills make any person more engaged and connected to the world around them. These skills can empower and inspire you - and any community that you are a part of - with greater awareness and appreciation for the ways communication and language construct our world.



Our writing course sequence at GCC will give you practice in:

- developing original ideas and new knowledge through writing
- classical argumentation
- research methods
- rhetorical analysis (elements that create persuasion in a text)
- interdisciplinary approaches to writing
- critical thinking
- strong reading skills
- helpful writing and revision strategies

So why take a writing class? What's the point?

Writing is a central vehicle for *critical thinking*, *analysis*, and *development of new knowledge* - all things that the college experience encourages.

In many ways, writing is a form of *civic engagement*. As a good citizen, you can use writing as a way to better understand the world, the ideas of others, and to formulate your own ideas and understanding of the world. Along the way, you can study and better

understand how to read, write, and communicate in ways that are effective for your audience. This means that you become practiced at interpreting the ideas of others, considering multiple perspectives, and presenting your own ideas/theories/arguments in ways that are clear and well-reasoned.

Writing is a form of *problem solving* and *decision making*.

As you write, you are making your own choices about how you present ideas to your readers (things like organization, word choice, selecting sources, etc.). In college writing, what you write about is typically a problem-solving activity. A tension, “big burning question,” hypothesis, theory, or hunch is always lurking underneath any topic worth writing about. Tackling those “problems,” in content and in the writing itself, is what our classes are all about.

So what else should I keep in mind?

Developing strong, effective writing is a *process*. Effective, reader-oriented writing requires multiple drafts, taking risks, and feedback from peer readers and instructor coaches. The process of reading other sources, brainstorming, drafting, and thoughtful revision is most of the “work” in a composition class at GCC. Appreciating and working through complexity - and the decision-making involved in writing - is the main goal of our courses. This means that just getting a paper written is not the main goal. The kinds of thinking you do, and the ideas you develop for readers, are the central aim of any assignment you encounter. Appreciating and understanding the process that goes into this kind of intellectual work is one of the key outcomes we hope you take away from our classes.

One challenge is that it seems like every class, discipline, or professor wants something different when it comes to writing. So true, and that feels disorienting. But that’s also the nature of the act of writing and making meaning. What counts in one situation may not be valued in another. That’s because all communication is *context dependent*. So, the more you know what counts as the “best practices” or most valued strategies for a certain genre or audience, the more effective you can be as you address them. Our sequence of classes gives you a range of styles and approaches to writing that will help you know how to respond to certain genre expectations and, when appropriate, to extend beyond “fixed” or formulaic approaches.

Most writing is *interdisciplinary* and any *text* is available for interpretation.

Many professors choose to make their classes



interdisciplinary. Readings and assignments often move into fields beyond English, such as popular culture, philosophy, politics, history, social justice, health sciences, music, art, film, etc. In the discipline of English, we like to say that any “text” (in any form) is available for interpretation and analysis: a shopping mall, a graffiti wall, a TV show, a social media post, a speech, a photograph, a billboard, an infographic, etc. Such “texts” may show up in your class and your writing projects. You may also find yourself engaging with more literary texts, as a further introduction to the world of imaginative fiction and creative non-fiction.

The genre of the “scholarly essay” still offers an ideal space to allow for the kinds of thinking that define what the college environment is all about:

- reading deeply, going beyond just the “gist”
- appreciating and dwelling in complexity (resisting easy answers)
- adding to an ongoing scholarly conversation
- conducting ethical, credible research
- communicating ideas and arguments that are sound and tailored to the needs of your readers

