

# Integrating Writing into Your Course

Writing can be a productive pedagogical tool: it can help in the transfer of information, in the building of critical thinking skills, and in the understanding of concept and theories. But without the proper planning, it can also frustrate students, consume valuable class and office time, and become difficult to assess. The key to using writing effectively in your classes is to think through the goals you want to achieve during the semester and then ask yourself how writing will help in that task. From there you can begin to shape assignments, classroom activities, and assessment strategies. What follows are some basic questions designed to help you start thinking about your classes and about how writing can fit into them efficiently and productively. You should feel comfortable discussing these questions with your colleagues, your supervisors-maybe even your students.

## Clarifying the Goals for Your Class

1. Where is your course in terms of the department curriculum?
2. Does the department have a stated list of goals or purposes for the class?
3. What should students know and be able to do when they leave your class?

## Using Writing to Achieve those Goals

1. What type of assignments best teach to your stated goals?
2. Can assignments be sequenced in ways that build on learned skills and concepts?
3. Can some of the goals be met without writing?

## Assigning Writing

1. How will you present writing assignments to students?
2. What information do students need to have before they start the assignment?
3. How long does the writing have to be?
4. How much time do students need to complete the assignment?
5. When and how will writing be discussed in your class?

## Assessing Writing

1. What do you want students to demonstrate with their writing?
2. What are your criteria for a successful assignment?
3. How have these criteria been communicated to the students?
4. How will balance concerns for content and form (spelling, grammar, etc.)?
5. What will students learn from your comments and grading?
6. How can you avoid being buried under papers?
7. How will you avoid plagiarism?

## **Building Writing into Your Syllabus**

1. When will writing be assigned in your class? Why at those moments?
2. Will you spend class or office time discussing student writing?