Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Distinguish among the four general writing purposes.
2. Discuss how a writer determines who his or her audience is.
3. Explain how environment can affect a writer.
4. Identify the qualities of effective writing.
5. Discover the importance of ethics in writing.
6. Discuss specific strategies that can help someone become a more successful reader.
7. Summarize the thesis and main ideas of a source.
8. Demonstrate how to critique a scholarly article.

Reading Assignment


Chapter 1: Writing: A First Look
Chapter 2: Strategies for Successful Reading

*The Little, Brown Compact Handbook:*

Chapter 1: The Writing Situation

Unit Lesson

It is imperative to understand not only how you are most comfortable writing but why you write as well. In today’s world filled with technology and videogames, writing effectively is at an all-time low. It seems as if critical thinking has been replaced by fast moving images on a screen. In this course, you to understand who you are through the voice you portray in your writing. This course is really about you learning to find yourself through the written word rather than allowing technology to manipulate your thoughts. Do not misunderstand. Technology is useful in finding resources to back up your claims, but it is detrimental to rely on it too much. Throughout this course, you will discover more of who you are and what you believe in. Your instructor will help you discover your voice in this course and how to be confident in it.

First of all, when you begin your writing experience, you must find a place and environment in which you are most comfortable writing. Do you prefer writing at a desk? Do you prefer writing in a comfortable chair in front of the television? Do you prefer noise in the background, or do you prefer it to be exceptionally quiet? You must consider these questions before you embark on your journey in order to be more at ease and comfortable in your writing. When you are more comfortable, your voice is more confident, and hence, your essay will be more ethos-driven, which means that your credibility as a writer is less likely to be questioned.

Once you find the environment that will help you be more comfortable with your writing, the second step is to consider your purpose for writing. Why must you brainstorm what you are going to write? There is no point in writing something if you do not have a reason for writing. Why do you feel as if your voice must be heard? What do you have to say that no one else has said, and why must it be said? Writing with a purpose is the very essence of rhetorical writing. Mastering the art of rhetoric will not only make you more persuasive, but it will also give you the analytical weapons necessary to resist the persuasion of others.
Another quintessential aspect of rhetorical writing is knowing who your audience is. Your language changes depending on whom you are writing to. For instance, if you ended up in jail for some reason, and you only were allowed to call one person to bail you out, you would say something completely different to your best friend than you would to your boss or to your pastor or priest. You would alter your language to attain the desired results or emotions. Hence, any time you write, you must keep in mind who will be reading your work, so you can adequately write to get the desired response from your reader (audience).

If your intention is to achieve a desired response from your audience, it may be helpful to imagine them as your jury and you as the lawyer arguing your case. You lead them in with your introduction, and at the end of the introduction, you present them with your main claim (thesis), which will be discussed in more detail in the next unit. This is the one statement that you will prove throughout the body of your essay. Your claims in the body paragraphs will all support that thesis statement. Then, when you are ready to conclude your case, you will restate your main claims and reiterate why your thesis is true. Have confidence and be powerful with your voice! You are the expert here, and your audience needs to believe that.

Your audience will believe your argument further if you have outside sources to back up your claims. This is why it is integral to understand any sources you may use for your paper. It helps to write summaries about these sources in order to understand the gist of what they are saying. With a summary, you would begin with the thesis of the article and then state the main ideas of it. Summaries are meant to be short—oftentimes only a paragraph long. This course will ask you to write them in order to know that you have understood what you have read.

This course may also ask you to write summaries in order for you to find sources about your topic, which will help you know where your voice fits within the conversation. It is imperative that you are original in your writing as there is no point in writing if what you have to say has already been said. You are the only one who can say what you have to say the way you can say it. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Insist on yourself; never imitate.” You must always be true to yourself and have courage to write what you have to say!

**Suggested Reading**

Using the Waldorf Online Library, locate and read the following articles:


**Learning Activities (Non-Graded)**

For some extra practice, complete the following exercises in *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*:

**Chapter 1:** Writing: A First Look, pp. 8-9, 12
**Chapter 2:** Strategies for Successful Reading, pp. 21, 24, 28

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.