

## INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT TEMPLATE

Program or course(s): **English 99**\_\_\_\_\_

Instructor(s): **Lynn Dunlap**\_\_\_\_\_ Academic period: **Fall 09**\_\_\_\_\_

### PART I: INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

#### **Overarching understanding goal(s) or throughline(s)**

- Students will develop an understanding of the characteristics (attitudes and actions) that lead to successful learning and apply it to their performance in the course and to their chosen program or academic majors.

#### **Generative topic(s)**

- *Relevant* to students and society
- *Central* to one or more disciplines or areas of expertise
- *Accessible* through multiple means
- *Connected* to other topics taught
- What are some of the challenges learners encounter?
- What are the characteristics that help them meet these challenges?
- What are the characteristics of people who are successful in a particular field?

#### **Key understanding-based assignment**

What will we ask our students to do to develop and demonstrate their understanding?

- Aimed at *targeted* concepts, methods, and skills
- Requires *thinking* with and about novel content
- *Builds and integrates* understanding

The final project comes as the culmination of a series of assignments:

- Students will first identify their own learning goals for reading and for writing, based on a pair of inventories, one of the skills used in active reading and one of skills used in the writing process.
- Based on a set of readings, which students annotate and discuss, each student will write paragraphs that (a) identify key characteristics that enabled people to overcome challenges to their learning and (b) characteristics of successful learners as identified by some current research.
- The final project asks students to interview someone in their program or major—a professor or someone in the profession—and do library/internet research to determine the critical reading, writing, and analytical skills that successful professionals need in their chosen field. They write the results of their analysis in a formal essay that uses supporting evidence from the interview and from one or more academic or professional journals or websites.

<b>College Readiness</b>	<b>Discipline #1: Developmental English</b>	<b>Discipline #2: Selected from the students' intended program or major</b>
<p><b>Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop <i>cognitive strategies</i></li> <li>• Advance <i>academic knowledge and skill</i></li> <li>• Foster <i>academic behavior</i></li> <li>• Advance understanding of <i>college culture</i></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key cognitive strategies include open-mindedness, analysis, and the ability to support their conclusions with reasoning and evidence.</li> <li>• Both careful <u>reading</u> and <u>academic writing</u> are necessary for completing the assignment. Students are also synthesizing the material they have been reading and analyzing all quarter. Students will also learn the kinds of academic knowledge and skills valued in their chosen fields.</li> <li>• The assignment introduces how to arrange for and conduct a formal interview and to research databases and professional organizations for the variety of resources available to professionals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on a few <i>key understandings</i></li> <li>• <i>Clear, explicit, and shared</i></li> <li>• Capture <i>dimensions of disciplinary understanding</i></li> <li>• Address <i>learning challenges</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Students should be able to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a well-organized explanatory essay, that is, one that is organized on the basis of a unifying thesis statement and developed with clear reasoning and convincing evidence from multiple sources.</li> <li>• Control an effective process to develop the essay (pre-writing strategies, including research, drafting, reviewing, revising, and editing).</li> <li>• Analyze information from various sources, including readings and interviews, and synthesize it into a meaningful discussion.</li> <li>• Recognize, read, and comprehend academic and/or professional writing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on a few <i>key understandings</i></li> <li>• <i>Clear, explicit, and shared</i></li> <li>• Capture <i>dimensions of disciplinary understanding</i></li> <li>• Address <i>learning challenges</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Students should be able to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the kinds of key cognitive and academic skills and behaviors that are expected in their field of interest, whether professional-technical or academic.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an awareness of the kinds of resources (both print and internet) available for continued professional and intellectual development in their studies and professions.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the standards of professionalism appropriate to their chosen field, both in the classroom and workplace.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets <i>understanding goals</i></li> <li>• By <i>self, peer, and teacher</i></li> <li>• Based on <i>explicit criteria</i></li> <li>• Offers <i>informative feedback</i></li> <li>• Students use peer reviews to plan and develop their essays and write reflections about each assignment.</li> <li>• The final essay is evaluated in terms of structure and organization, strength of its explanation (reasoning and evidence), and control of prose.</li> <li>• In addition, students submit a final portfolio of all their work for the quarter and write a final reflection that discusses their learning, as evidenced in all of the writing, including the final essay.</li> </ul>		

PART II: TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

Note: You may print copies of this page for each member of your team to complete, or compile people's comments on one page.

With respect to this topic and related assignments, I used to think...

*When I first started teaching English 99 three years ago, I thought it mattered most to introduce students to a variety of organizations for paragraphs and essays. Other course materials that I examined included practice in different modes, for example, paragraphs of examples or comparisons, essays that explain and that argue.*

But now I think...

*I have come to realize (from this and other coursework) that emphasizing structure communicates to students that controlling structure is the major goal in college writing when in fact, for most of their coursework the major concern is the quality of thinking and evidence. This does not mean that control of organization and prose doesn't matter, just that the thinking must be central. As a result, the course now begins with an intense emphasis on critical reading and an explicit focus on the kinds of analysis we bring to bear as we read.*

With respect to students' work on this topic and related assignments, I used to think...

*I used to think students were capable of good, solid intellectual work even if their writing skills were "rough." I believed that students could (and would) be able to control errors better once their thinking was clear—and once they had a compelling reason to take the necessary steps for control.*

But now I think...

*This set of sequenced assignments has convinced me more than ever that this basic assumption is correct. This term, more of the students enrolled in my class completed all of the work and improved their ability to control their writing. Furthermore, toward the end of the quarter with the last assignment, just when most students seem to "run out of gas" and struggle to complete, students in this class were energized. They were able to conduct interviews and library research and develop their 500 word essay in a short turn around time.*

## *Reaching College Readiness Integrative Assignment Template (Fall 2009)*

### PART III: STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ABOUT DOING THIS ASSIGNMENT (OPTIONAL)

*In their mid-quarter reflections students were asked to write a well-developed paragraph that explained one major way that their writing process had changed to their benefit. Over half of the class specifically discussed changes in their approach to reading, both in terms of annotating, rereading, and using specific textual evidence from readings in their writing. In their final essays, students identified the expectations for continued reading in their fields. Of the 25 students enrolled, 13 were in professional-technical fields, and these students, were impressed to find—and read—professional publications relevant to their chosen careers. During reviews, most brought in the results of their searches and interviews and pointed out how much they would be expected to continue to read and research once they had completed their degrees.*

*Students did not submit a reflection on the final essay assignment. Instead, they wrote a reflection on their learning for the whole quarter. Although they did not directly address the final assignment, I have included a few comments that are typical of the students' sense of the work of the quarter.*

- A student plans to enter a dental hygiene program noted that writing had “always been a struggle” because she didn’t “like to sit down and focus on writing a paper over a long period of time.” She described specific changes in her control of structure and development, based, as she argued, on changes in her approach to reading and peer review. She wrote: “One of the main writing processes I learned that is vital to a successful paper is rereading articles at least two or three times. This helped me gain a better understanding of the article and made it easier for me to answer the prompt. . . . Taking the time to comprehend the reading by taking notes underlining, and highlighting has helped me begin the next step to my writing process.”
- A student from the automotive tech program wrote of the difficulty of learning to annotate texts: “This was very hard for me because I was always told not to mark up your books and to keep them nice for the next person.” Learning to read carefully and annotate helped him considerably: “That way we for sure had the stuff we would need for essay or report.”
- A pre-nursing student explained that in high school she was “not enthusiastic about academic assignments” and, quite frankly, “lacked the discipline and focus required to develop adequate writing skills.” In the process of explaining her growth during the quarter, she found that, at the beginning, she even “found it hard to interpret the instructions for an assignment.” She described that her ability to control her papers developed from organization, peer reviews that helped her to detach from her paper, and reading her own work aloud. She concludes: “In a successful life, education is a constant. Improving my writing skills in English 99 has demonstrated that there will always be a situation where I will need these skills. I now know the value of constant improvement and that there are still many things that I can and will continue to improve on. Thanks to my new outlook on education, I am excited to make these improvements. I look forward to the future, and the opportunity to continue learning.”
- A student who intends to become a CPA wrote of his transformation from believing himself “an adequate college level writer” to one who has learned more than he imagined he would: “I ended up starting with average writing skills, to learning more about the writing process that would make my papers better, and now I plan for what I want from myself after this class ends.” These goals for his future include changing his approach to starting essays (not jump starting) and becoming a better analyst/critical thinker. As he notes, “Analyzing evidence for my audience’s benefit will help me in my future as a financial analyst and it could even take me somewhere as a writer.”