

## Faculty Tips for FYW 150 Courses

The following insights were generated by faculty scorers who collectively analyzed 200 student essays during the Fall 2018 CFYW Assessment Project. The Core Assessment Team, together with the Writing Program Director and the Writing Core Area Representative, compiled these tips, which are designed to help faculty and students in future FYW 150 courses. While these insights come from scorers who read the Comparative Rhetorical Analysis Essay, they can be applied to other assignments as well.

1. **Outcomes and Rubric.** Faculty scorers suggested that it would be beneficial for FYW professors to take time exploring the rubric criteria with students. Since this rubric was designed to align with the FYW learning outcomes, spending class time in this way could be valuable to other assignments as well.
2. **Assignment Prompts.** Faculty scorers suggested that students would benefit from assignment sheets/prompts with explicit directions related to the criteria. They found that when instructions were not explicit in the prompt - even if they were present on the rubric - the students' likelihood of successfully demonstrating the learning outcomes were diminished. Scorers agreed that there is a difference between students being given details in the assignment prompt and being able to actually execute those details within an essay, particularly at the freshman level.
3. **Choice of Texts for Comparative Analysis.** The choice of texts for the comparison will impact student success. The results from the assessment project showed that students were better able to meet the learning outcomes for CFYW on the comparative rhetorical analysis assignment if they were not left to decide which two texts to select for the comparison. This difference in performance was statistically significant across all criteria except "Analysis of Multiple Discourses." While the cause of this difference was not researched in depth, scorers did note that students had a more challenging time if they compared texts that may not be, in fact, very different in terms of the types of rhetoric used (a memoir and a novel, for instance, are both creative texts that are more similar to each other than, say, a newspaper article and an academic journal article).
4. **Criteria-Based Concepts Worth Emphasizing/Reinforcing.** Faculty scorers also provided criterion-specific suggestions:
  - Audience Awareness
    - It is helpful to remind students to supply needed context for their audience, minus extensive summary.
  - Analysis of Multiple Discourses
    - Clearly define the idea of different discourses/genres, provide examples, and give appropriate context for comparing different texts.
    - Help students to understand that they are not comparing the quality of each argument but rather how each argument was made, based on each discourse's conventions/methodologies. Emphasize genre conventions and the different strategies in which different genres engage.
  - Content Development & Use of Evidence
    - Remind students to supply details and quotes to support claims.

- Use of Sources vs Use of Evidence
    - Help student to understand the difference between these two terms.
      - Use of evidence: *what* you choose to use as support for a claim. Example: using appropriate, relevant, and compelling evidence to support claims.
      - Use of sources examples: *how* you choose to display that evidence to support the claim. Examples: distilling the reference document down to its essence, using a quotation that is reasonable in length, using a reasonable number of quotations, and using a quotation in an appropriate place (not just for the purposes of adding a quotation to the essay).
  - Source Citation
    - Clearly articulate expectations for using and citing sources (a basic example would be the explicit instruction for students to include a works cited page). Faculty scorers commented that students need an instruction to cite sources in an assignment such as this one, because - at the freshman level - the student tends to see the professor as the audience. In other words, if the professor assigns the text to analyze, the student assumes that the professor knows the citation, and thus, it does not need to be cited (when, in fact, it does).
5. **Terminology.** There are many technical terms associated with a comparative rhetorical analysis, e.g., “discourse,” “genre,” “audience,” etc. It is important to make sure students understand what these terms mean, and not assume they understand them. (This tip came from a professor who taught the FYW course and realized that this is something they needed to incorporate into their future courses.) The “CFYW Rubric Glossary of Terms” contains definitions of the main terms as well as several references for exploring/addressing the terms in greater depth. The glossary was constructed as an extra resource for you to use as inspiration when constructing your CFYW courses.

*We hope you find these tips helpful when you design your assignments.  
Keep in mind that there is a lot of leeway in how you can frame an assignment  
that addresses these learning outcomes!*

## CFYW Rubric Glossary of Terms

**GENRE**: a category of texts that share repeatable patterns or features; a set of typified responses to repeated rhetorical situations

**DISCOURSE**: refers to the uses of language or symbols within a text or group of texts created for a particular community

**RHETORICAL ANALYSIS**: analysis of the language and other symbolic strategies people use to influence others

**RHETORICAL STANCE**: strategies that writers use to position themselves in relation to readers; often, a synonym for authorial voice

### *For Further Reading*

**Dirk, Kerry.** “Navigating Genres.” *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 1*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky. Anderson: Parlor Press and WAC Clearinghouse, 2010, pp. 249-62.

In this text, which is written specifically for an undergraduate audience, Dirk makes accessible the genre theories of Bitzer, Miller, Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff. Following these scholars, she offers two overlapping definitions of genre: genre is “rhetorical action” (it gets things done) and genre responds to recurring situations. Perhaps most importantly, Dirk argues that genre boundaries are never fixed. That is, the qualities that define a genre will change over time and in response to the exigencies of particular situations.

**Gee, James Paul.** “Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics.” *Journal of Education* vol. 171, no. 1, 1989, pp. 5-17.

In this text, which is somewhat accessible to undergraduate audiences, Gee discusses how people are socialized through language. He defines concepts such as dominant Discourse, nondominant Discourse, primary and secondary Discourses, literacy, and metaknowledge. Particularly useful is his definition of Discourse, which he defines as a “sort of ‘identity kit’ which comes complete with appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize . . . . It turns out that much that is claimed, controversially, to be true of second language acquisition or socially situated cognition . . . is, in fact, more obviously true of the acquisition of Discourse. Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction . . . but by enculturation (‘apprenticeship’) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interactions with people who have already mastered the Discourse” (7).

**Lancaster, Zak.** “Making Stance Explicit for Second-Language Writers in the Disciplines: What Faculty Need to Know about the Language of Stance-taking.” *WAC and Second Language Writers: Research Towards Linguistically and Culturally Inclusive Programs and Practices*, edited by Terry M. Zawacki and Michelle Cox. Anderson: Parlor Press and WAC Clearinghouse, 2014, pp. 269-298.

Instructors interested in reading more about rhetorical stance may find Lancaster’s essay helpful. In it, he defines rhetorical stance in the following way: “ways that writers—as they go about analyzing and evaluating things, making assertions and recommendations, providing evidence and justifications and so forth—project an authorial presence in their texts, one that conveys attitudes and feelings and that interacts with the imagined readers by recognizing their views, identifying points of shared knowledge, conceding limitations, and otherwise positioning them as aligned with or resistant to the views being advanced in the text” (273).

**Selzer, Jack. "Rhetorical Analysis: Understanding How Texts Persuade Readers." *What Writing Does and How It Does It*, edited by Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior. Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2004, pp. 279-307.**

Writing for an undergraduate audience, Selzer first defines rhetorical analysis and then demonstrates rhetorical analysis of two different texts. His first analysis is focused on the textual strategies and formal features of E.B. White's essay "Education" (1944). The second rhetorical analysis, a study of the rhetoric of Milton Friedman's "Open Letter to Bill Bennett" (1989), focuses on how Friedman's text functions in its historical, cultural, and publication context.