

CRITICAL READING AND WRITING (CRW) COURSE GUIDELINES

In recognition of the importance of good writing for effective communication, Memorial University mandates high standards for student writing including a mastery of content, clear organization, appropriate style, and correct mechanics. The General Academic Regulations for all of the University's undergraduate programs stipulate that "Students at all university levels should have reasonably sophisticated and effective communication skills and are expected to demonstrate proficiency in logical organization, clarity of expression and grammatical correctness. Good writing is expected of students in all courses. Upon graduation students should be capable of expressing complicated ideas clearly and concisely and should be able to develop arguments in a logical manner."

Critical Reading and Writing (CRW) courses are offered by the Faculty of Arts, in the Humanities and/or Social Sciences. They provide foundational knowledge and skills for students across Memorial University, while exposing them to discipline-related content. Students are strongly encouraged to complete CRW courses early in their program of study in order to prepare them for other Memorial University courses.

"Critical Reading and Writing in..." courses help students integrate the critical reading process with the writing process, and foster increased awareness of and competence in the effective use of the English language in a variety of disciplines. Teaching critical reading involves helping students to read material closely and accurately. It encourages the development of the ability to analyze texts and arguments, including the identification of an argument and/or the way that evidence is used to support a thesis, and fosters increased awareness of and competence in the effective use of language. Critical writing involves the clear expression and logical organization of analytical thoughts, the precise use of language as appropriate for academic writing, the incorporation of valid evidence, and the competent use of existing scholarship.

The discipline-specific content of CRW courses varies by department, program, and/or the instructor. CRW courses offered by the Department of English place additional weight and emphasis on the construction and clarity of writing, on appreciating the skill of writing and literary expression, and on understanding and using a variety of prose styles through the close analysis of the nuances of language and multiple rhetorical strategies.

Critical Reading and Writing Course Principles

1. The following principles are observed in all Faculty of Arts courses that can be used to fulfill the Critical Reading and Writing (CRW) requirement of the Bachelor of Arts degree:

- a) In the university calendar, the title of a CRW course must be "Critical Reading and Writing in..." and the course description must contain the following statement: "All sections of this course follow CRW guidelines available at www.mun.ca/arts/crw".
- b) CRW courses are offered only at the 1000-level or 2000-level.
- c) Normally, a minimum of three-quarters (75 percent) of the evaluation in a CRW course shall be based on the assessment of critical reading and writing. The particular nature of the course should be made clear to students.

d) CRW courses have a maximum enrollment of 35 students in order to allow instructors sufficient time to provide detailed feedback on numerous written assignments.

Guidelines for Developing a CRW Course

2. The following practices are normally followed in Critical Reading and Writing courses.

a) A CRW course syllabus should comprehensively demonstrate that students are evaluated on their progress in developing critical reading and writing knowledge and skills. It is expected that the means of evaluation will clearly demonstrate that multiple stages of feedback will be provided. This will be achieved, for instance, through a process of text drafting, revision, and resubmission; a series of short written assignments (e.g., summaries, close textual analyses); the completion of a portfolio of writing; and/or other forms of sequenced writing assignments that draw upon discipline-related content, which may include the ability to locate and assess evidence.

- Example of critical reading activity: Small group discussions to examine closely the organization of news stories and academic journal articles in order to help students differentiate between statements of fact and matters of editorial opinion.
- Example of critical writing activity: Discussion about the writing techniques detailed in writing resource support materials, followed by short writing assignments involving discipline-specific topics that are designed to encourage precision in writing.

b) Normally, students in a CRW course should be directed to resources that may enhance their knowledge and skills in critical reading and writing, such as writing manuals, style manuals, discipline-specific manuals, and credible library and online resources.

c) Instructors of CRW courses are encouraged to offer related critical writing guidance using library support. For example, a library orientation session with a Librarian may include instruction on how to locate more general critical writing and reading resources, as well as discipline-specific material. It may also involve assessing print and online sources, a discussion of citation methods, the importance of avoiding plagiarism, and/or the ethical use and citation of resources and reading materials.

Administrative Matters

3. The following administrative practices are normally observed:

a) Pedagogical resources for CRW course instructors and students are available on the Faculty of Arts website.

b) The Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUGS), in consultation with the relevant department Head or designate, is responsible for coordinating a periodic review of designated CRW courses. On the recommendation of CUGS, the Critical Reading and Writing guidelines shall be updated by the Faculty of Arts. Academic unit Heads are responsible for ensuring that designated CRW courses observe the principles within those guidelines.

c) Courses that are eligible to satisfy the Critical Reading and Writing requirement are designated by an appropriate indication in the University Calendar. Such a notation must be approved by Senate, after which the Office of the Registrar will apply the appropriate attribute on the course catalogue in Banner. The application of this attribute on Banner will allow easy identification of courses which satisfy this requirement when that Office advises faculty, staff, and students. In the event that a course substitution is deemed necessary by the Committee on Undergraduate Studies, such a decision will not set a precedent, and a record of the Committee's decision will be maintained by the Office of the Registrar in student files. If CUGS approves a substitution, it shall ask the Head of the corresponding academic unit if that unit wishes to initiate a calendar change proposal to formally assign the CRW designation to the course.

d) A course completed at another institution whose syllabus establishes that the course content has observed these guidelines may, upon approval of the Committee on Undergraduate Studies, be deemed eligible for transfer towards the Critical Reading and Writing requirement.

4. Information in the University Calendar and approved by Senate prevails over information in these guidelines.

*Approved by the Faculty of Arts Council
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