

# Writing Lab

## Course Description

This 4-credit course is a “laboratory” offered in coordination with the BA Colloquium; it features direct instruction along with hands-on practice in a variety of tried-and-true techniques focused on “the 5 Rs”: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Resilience, and Rhythm (a.k.a. time management).

Selected learning outcomes\*:

- Identify effective methods for interdisciplinary study, with special attention to the written word
- Engage in the practice of critical and creative reading, writing, analysis, and expression
- Develop familiarity with theories and practices of critical thinking
- Deepen familiarity with a range of note-taking techniques
- Ability to recognize, reflect on, and improve study skills
- Apply critical thinking to study preparation

\* see also attached AAC&U rubrics on reading, written communication, and critical thinking

## Reading

Course readings braid three zones of experiential inquiry: (1) the praxis of critical thinking in relation to the craft of research; (2) “practical neuroscience” as described in *Buddha’s Brain* by Rick Hanson; and (3) the craft of writing – see p. 3 for more on weekly writing.

Textbooks\*:

Wayne Booth, et al, *The Craft of Research* – 4th ed (Chicago 2016)  
Jonathan Haber, *Critical Thinking* (MIT 2020)  
Rick Hanson, *Buddha’s Brain* (New Harbinger 2009)  
John Warner, *The Writer’s Practice* (Penguin 2019)  
*The American Heritage Dictionary* – 5th ed (HarperCollins 2011)

\* further required readings also provided via photocopies

**Writing Lab | Schedule of Readings + Writing Due | Fall 2024 (subject to change)**

WEEK 1 Wednesday 10/2 6-9pm

Welcome + Habits of Effective Dialog + more

WEEK 2 Wednesday 10/9 6-9pm

*The Writer's Practice* – pp. 1-15 – Getting Started

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 1-36 – Ch. 1: The Genealogy of Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. i-3 – blurbs + Foreword + Preface + Acknowledgments + Introduction

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => "Who are you (as a writer)?" ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 3 Wednesday 10/16 6-9pm

*The Writer's Practice* – pp. 16-40 – Section I: Introduction to the Writer's Practice

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 37-62 – start of Ch. 2: Components of Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 5-19 – Introduction + Ch. 1: The Self-Transforming Brain

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => "How do I...?" or "Should I...?" ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 4 Wednesday 10/23 6-9pm

*The Writer's Practice* – pp. 121-161 – start of Section IV: Research and Argument

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 62-78 – middle of Ch. 2: Components of Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 23-48 – Ch. 2: The Evolution of Suffering

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => Writing #3 TBA ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 5 Wednesday 10/30 6-9pm

*The Craft of Research* – pp. 110-121 – Ch. 7: Making Good Arguments

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 80-100 – rest of Ch. 2: Components of Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 49-63 – Ch. 3: The First and Second Dart

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => MIDTERM PORTFOLIO (compilation of writing + cover letter)

WEEK 6 Wednesday 11/6 6-9pm

*The Craft of Research* – pp. 122-131 – Ch. 8: Making Claims

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 101-16 – start of Ch. 3: Defining, Teaching, + Assessing Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 67-77 – Ch. 4: Taking in the Good

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => Writing #4 TBA ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 7 Wednesday 11/13 6-9pm

*The Craft of Research* – pp. 132-140 – Ch. 9: Assembling Reasons and Evidence

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 116-38 – middle of Ch. 3: Defining, Teaching, + Assessing Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 79-87 – first half of Ch. 5: Cooling the Fires

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => Writing #5 TBA ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 8 Wednesday 11/20 6-9pm => guest presentation TBA

*The Craft of Research* – pp. 141-54 – Ch. 10: Acknowledgements and Responses

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 138-159 – rest of Ch. 3: Defining, Teaching, + Assessing Critical Thinking

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 88-96 – last half of Ch. 5: Cooling the Fires

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => Writing #6 TBA ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

~~~~~fall break: no class 11/27~~~~~

WEEK 9 Wednesday 12/4 6-9pm

*The Craft of Research* – pp. 155-72 – Ch. 11: Warrants

*Critical Thinking* – pp. 161-181 – Ch. 4: Where Do We Go From Here?

*Buddha's Brain* – pp. 97-118 – Ch. 6: Strong Intentions + Ch. 7: Equanimity

+ possible TBA

WRITING DUE => Writing #7 TBA ~ 500-750 words  
COMMONPLACE BOOK x 3 entries

WEEK 10 Wednesday 12/11 6-9pm

Reading TBA

WRITING DUE => FINAL PORTFOLIO (compilation of writing + cover letter)

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|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Writing Lab</i>   <b>WEEKLY WRITING</b>   Fall 2024 |
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A laboratory, [according to Merriam-Webster](#), can be broadly described as “a place providing opportunity for experimentation, observation, or practice in a field of study.” The weekly writing for in this course can be thought of as places of opportunity in this sense. Each week you will have a writing assignment of 500-750 words. Peer review starts in week 3 – each week each of you will review the work of 2 peers according a recipe that will be provided. Starting week 2 you are expected to add 3 entries to your COMMONPLACE BOOK with material from Writing Lab readings. (Recipe for the COMMONPLACE BOOK can be found in the BA Colloquium syllabus.) In week 5 you will submit a MIDTERM PORTFOLIO of your work followed in week 10 by a FINAL PORTFOLIO – both of which will include a cover letter (portfolio recipes will be provided). Our motto in doing this work is: “*The only way to do this right is by writing!*”

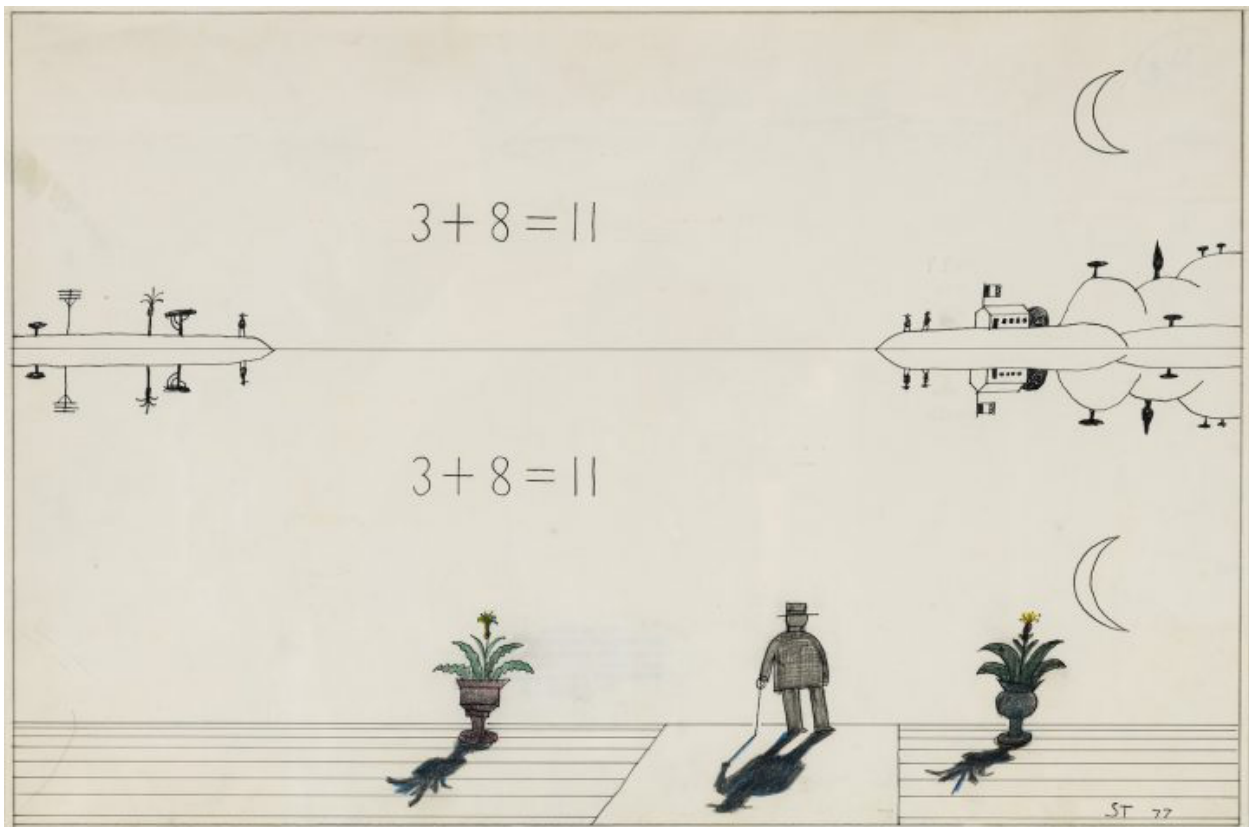
## Basic Expectations

We will do a lot of writing both in class and out of it this quarter, so you will be provided with the right tools for the job: good notebooks, loose-leaf paper, a writing utensil, and more.

To read in this class always means “to annotate.” You can do this directly on photocopies we are using, or in your own notebook, or on post-it notes & other scraps of paper in textbooks.

Don’t be alarmed by the preponderance of “TBAs” (= “to be announced”) on our schedule. They are there so that we can harness emergent properties based on (a) expressions of student interest and (b) faculty assessment of student need. The schedule may be adjusted accordingly.

The expectation for attendance is that everyone enrolled is willing and able to participate in all class sessions. If you need to miss class, please be sure to alert faculty in advance whenever possible. We are here because you are here, and we know how seriously you take your learning. We aim to do everything we can to work to “clear away obstacles to learning.” As you encounter obstacles, please make note and share with faculty; this increases our capacity to organize as a learning community to do what we can to transform those obstacles into opportunities.



Saul Steinberg, “Untitled” (1977)



**Center for Leadership & Educational Equity**

## Community Agreements

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*Developed in the field by educators.*

When we talk about that which will sustain and nurture our spiritual growth as a people, we must once again talk about the importance of community. For one of the most vital ways that we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone.

*bell hooks – Teaching to Transgress*

**1. Show up (or choose to be present).**

This Warrior / Leader principle guides us to be both firm and yielding, honoring our own individual limits and boundaries as well as the limits and boundaries of others.

**2. Pay attention (to heart and meaning).**

This principle guides individuals to observe where in their experience they are half-hearted rather than open-hearted, when they carry a doubting heart rather than a clear heart, and when they are experiencing weak-heartedness rather than strong-heartedness.

**3. Tell the truth (without blame or judgment).**

This principle invokes the idea that the visionary is one who brings their voice into the world and refuses to edit, rehearse, perform, or hide. The task here is to come forward fully with our gifts, talents, and resources and to powerfully meet the tests and challenges of life.

**4. Be open to outcome (not attached to outcome).**

This principle is known as the Way of the Teacher. Traditional societies believe wisdom is flexible and fluid, never positional, that the human resource of wisdom is accessed by learning how to trust and how to be comfortable with states of not knowing.

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 16 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

## Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The clearest finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is “How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?” In focusing on this question, the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers’ fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer’s growing engagement with writing and disciplinary through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers’ work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing—in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “White Paper on Writing Assessment” (2008)<sup>1</sup> and the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” (2008)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The original 2008 hyperlink to this resource is no longer functional ([www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper](http://www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper)). An updated version is available online as of 2022 (<https://cccc.ndte.org/cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment>); however, this VALUE rubric is based off the original 2008 version, which differs from the updated version.

<sup>2</sup> The original 2008 hyperlink to this resource is no longer functional ([www.ndte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm](http://www.ndte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm)). An updated hyperlink is in use as of 2022 (<https://ncte.org/statement/ncte-wpa-white-paper-on-writing-assessment-in-colleges-and-universities/>).

### Glossary

*The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.*

- **Content development:** The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- **Context of and purpose for writing:** The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- **Disciplinary conventions:** Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields (e.g., introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic). Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others; credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- **Evidence:** Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- **Genre conventions:** Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices (e.g., lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays).
- **Sources:** Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes—to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.



Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

|                                                                                                                                                                                         | Capstone<br>4                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Milestones<br>3 2                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                | Benchmark<br>1                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Context of and Purpose for Writing</b><br><i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s)</i>                                 | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.                                                                                | Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).           | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). | Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience). |
| <b>Content Development</b>                                                                                                                                                              | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.                                                                              | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.                                                     | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.                                                                   | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.                                                          |
| <b>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions</b><br><i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary)</i> | Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices. | Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices. | Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation.                            | Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.                                                                      |
| <b>Sources and Evidence</b>                                                                                                                                                             | Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.                                                                                | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.                                           | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.             | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.                                                                           |
| <b>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</b>                                                                                                                                                  | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency and is virtually error-free.                                                                                                            | Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.                                                                 | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.                                                | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.                                                                          |



The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 16 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

### Definition

Reading is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow et al., 2002). (From [www.rand.org/pubs/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB8024/index1.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/pubs/research_briefs/RB8024/index1.html))

### Framing Language

To paraphrase Phaedrus, texts do not explain, nor answer questions about, themselves. They must be located, approached, decoded, comprehended, analyzed, interpreted, and discussed, especially complex academic texts used in college and university classrooms for purposes of learning. Historically, college professors have not considered the teaching of reading necessary other than as a “basic skill” in which students may require “remediation.” They have assumed that students come with the ability to read and have placed responsibility for its absence on teachers in elementary and secondary schools.

This absence of reading instruction in higher education must, can, and will change, and this rubric marks a direction for this change. Why the change? Even the strongest, most experienced readers making the transition from high school to college have not learned what they need to know and do to make sense of texts in the context of professional and academic scholarship—to say nothing about readers who are either not as strong or as experienced. Also, readers mature and develop their repertoire of reading performances naturally during the undergraduate years and beyond as a consequence of meeting textual challenges. This rubric provides some initial steps toward finding ways to measure undergraduate students’ progress along the continuum. Our intention in creating this rubric is to support and promote the teaching of undergraduates as readers to take on increasingly higher levels of concerns with texts and to read as one of “those who comprehend.”

Readers, as they move beyond their undergraduate experiences, should be motivated to approach texts and respond to them with a reflective level of curiosity and the ability to apply aspects of the texts they approach to a variety of aspects in their lives. This rubric provides the framework for evaluating both students’ developing relationship to texts and their relative success with the range of texts their coursework introduces them to. It is likely that users of this rubric will detect that the cell boundaries are permeable, and the criteria of the rubric are, to a degree, interrelated.

## Glossary

*The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.*

- **Analysis:** The process of recognizing and using features of a text to build a more advanced understanding of the meaning of a text. (Might include evaluation of genre, language, tone, stated purpose, explicit or implicit logic [including flaws of reasoning], and historical context as they contribute to the meaning of a text.)
- **Comprehension:** The extent to which a reader “gets” the text, both literally and figuratively. Accomplished and sophisticated readers will have moved from being able to “get” the meaning that the language of the text provides to being able to “get” the implications of the text, the questions it raises, and the counterarguments one might suggest in response to it. A helpful and accessible discussion of ‘comprehension’ is found in Chapter 2 of the RAND report, Reading for Understanding: [www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1465/MR1465.ch2.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1465/MR1465.ch2.pdf).
- **Epistemological lens:** The knowledge framework a reader develops in a specific discipline as s/he moves through an academic major (e.g., essays, textbook chapters, literary works, journal articles, lab reports, grant proposals, lectures, blogs, webpages, or literature reviews). The depth and breadth of this knowledge provides the foundation for independent and self-regulated responses to the range of texts in any discipline or field that students will encounter.
- **Genre:** A particular kind of “text” defined by a set of disciplinary conventions or agreements learned through participation in academic discourse. Genre governs what texts can be about, how they are structured, what to expect from them, what can be done with them, and how to use them.
- **Interpretation:** Determining or construing the meaning of a text or part of a text in a particular way based on textual and contextual information.
- **Interpretive strategies:** Purposeful approaches from different perspectives, which include, for example, asking clarifying questions, building knowledge of the context in which a text was written, visualizing and considering counterfactuals (asking questions that challenge the assumptions or claims of the text; e.g., What might our country be like if the Civil War had not happened? How would Hamlet be different if Hamlet had simply killed the King?).
- **Multiple perspectives:** Consideration of how text-based meanings might differ depending on point of view.
- **Parts:** Titles, headings, meaning of vocabulary from context, structure of the text, and important ideas and relationships among those ideas.
- **Relationship to text:** The set of expectations and intentions a reader brings to a particular text or set of texts.
- **Searches intentionally for relationships:** An active and highly aware quality of thinking closely related to inquiry and research.
- **Takes texts apart:** Discerns the level of importance or abstraction of textual elements and sees big and small pieces as parts of the whole meaning (compare to *analysis* above).
- **Metacognition:** This is not a word that appears explicitly anywhere in the rubric, but it is implicit in a number of the descriptors, and is certainly a term that we find frequently in discussions of successful and rich learning. Metacognition (a term typically attributed to the cognitive psychologist J. H. Flavell) applied to reading refers to the awareness, deliberateness, and reflexivity defining the activities and strategies that readers must control in order to work their ways effectively through different sorts of texts, from lab reports to sonnets, from math texts to historical narratives, or from grant applications to graphic novels, for example. Metacognition refers here as well to an accomplished reader’s ability to consider the ethos reflected in any such text; to know that one is present and should be considered in any use of, or response to, a text.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

|                                                                                    | Capstone<br>4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Milestones<br>3 2                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Benchmark<br>1                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comprehension</b>                                                               | Recognizes possible implications of the text for contexts, perspectives, or issues beyond the assigned task within the classroom or beyond the author's explicit message (e.g., might recognize broader issues at play, or might pose challenges to the author's message and presentation). | Uses the text, general background knowledge, and/or specific knowledge of the author's context to draw more complex inferences about the author's message and attitude.     | Evaluates how textual features (e.g., sentence and paragraph structure or tone) contribute to the author's message; draws basic inferences about context and purpose of text.                                | Apprehends vocabulary appropriately to paraphrase or summarize the information the text communicates.                                                             |
| <b>Genres</b>                                                                      | Uses ability to identify texts within and across genres, monitoring and adjusting reading strategies and expectations based on generic nuances of particular texts.                                                                                                                         | Articulates distinctions among genres and their characteristic conventions.                                                                                                 | Reflects on reading experiences across a variety of genres, reading both with and against the grain experimentally and intentionally.                                                                        | Applies tacit genre knowledge to a variety of classroom reading assignments in productive, if unreflective, ways.                                                 |
| <b>Relationship to Text</b><br><i>Making meanings with texts in their contexts</i> | Evaluates texts for scholarly significance and relevance within and across the various disciplines, evaluating them according to their contributions and consequences.                                                                                                                      | Uses texts in the context of scholarship to develop a foundation of disciplinary knowledge and to raise and explore important questions.                                    | Engages texts with the intention and expectation of building topical and world knowledge.                                                                                                                    | Approaches texts in the context of assignments with the intention and expectation of finding right answers and learning facts and concepts to display for credit. |
| <b>Analysis</b><br><i>Interacting with texts in parts and as wholes</i>            | Evaluates strategies for relating ideas, text structure, or other textual features in order to build knowledge or insight within and across texts and disciplines.                                                                                                                          | Identifies relations among ideas, text structure, or other textual features to evaluate how they support an advanced understanding of the text as a whole.                  | Recognizes relations among parts or aspects of a text, such as effective or ineffective arguments or literary features, in considering how these contribute to a basic understanding of the text as a whole. | Identifies aspects of a text (e.g., content, structure, or relations among ideas) as needed to respond to questions posed in assigned tasks.                      |
| <b>Interpretation</b><br><i>Making sense with texts as blueprints for meaning</i>  | Provides evidence not only that s/he can read by using an appropriate epistemological lens but that s/he can also engage in reading as part of a continuing dialogue within and beyond a discipline or a community of readers.                                                              | Articulates an understanding of the multiple ways of reading and the range of interpretive strategies particular to one's discipline(s) or in a given community of readers. | Demonstrates that s/he can read purposefully, choosing among interpretive strategies depending on the purpose of the reading.                                                                                | Can identify purpose(s) for reading, relying on an external authority such as an instructor for clarification of the task.                                        |
| <b>Reader's Voice</b><br><i>Participating in academic discourse about texts</i>    | Discusses texts with an independent intellectual and ethical disposition so as to further or maintain disciplinary conversations.                                                                                                                                                           | Elaborates on the texts (through interpretation or questioning) so as to deepen or enhance an ongoing discussion.                                                           | Discusses texts in structured conversations (such as in a classroom) in ways that contribute to a basic, shared understanding of the text.                                                                   | Comments about texts in ways that preserve the author's meanings and link them to the assignment.                                                                 |



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## Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

## Framing Language

This rubric is designed to be transdisciplinary, reflecting the recognition that success in all disciplines requires habits of inquiry and analysis that share common attributes. Further, research suggests that successful critical thinkers from all disciplines increasingly need to be able to apply those habits in various and changing situations encountered in all walks of life.

This rubric is designed for use with many different types of assignments and the suggestions here are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of text, data, or issues. Assignments that cut across presentation mode might be especially useful in some fields. If insight into the process components of critical thinking (e.g., how information sources were evaluated regardless of whether they were included in the product) is important, assignments focused on student reflection might be especially illuminating.

## Glossary

*The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.*

- **Ambiguity:** Information that may be interpreted in more than one way.
- **Assumptions:** Ideas, conditions, or beliefs (often implicit or unstated) that are “taken for granted or accepted as true without proof” (Dictionary.com, 2009, para. 1; [www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions](http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/assumptions)).
- **Context:** The historical, ethical, political, cultural, environmental, or circumstantial settings or conditions that influence and complicate the consideration of any issues, ideas, artifacts, and events.
- **Literal meaning:** Interpretation of information exactly as stated. For example, “she was green with envy” would be interpreted to mean that her skin was green.
- **Metaphor:** Information that is (intended to be) interpreted in a non-literal way. For example, “she was green with envy” is intended to convey an intensity of emotion, not a skin color.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

|                                                                                                        | Capstone<br>4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Milestones<br>3 2                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Benchmark<br>1                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Explanation of Issues</b>                                                                           | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.                                                                                                                    | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.                                                    | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.                                 | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.                                                                     |
| <b>Evidence</b><br><i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i> | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.                                                                                                        | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.                      | Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning. | Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.                         |
| <b>Influence of Context and Assumptions</b>                                                            | Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.                                                                                                                     | Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.                                                                                              | Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).                                         | Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position. |
| <b>Student's Position</b><br>(perspective, thesis/hypothesis)                                          | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis). | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis). | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.                                                                                                                  | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated but is simplistic and obvious.                                                                   |
| <b>Conclusions and Related Outcomes</b> (implications and consequences)                                | Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.                                                                                  | Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.                               | Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.                      | Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.                  |

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 16 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

## Framing Language

This rubric is intended to help faculty evaluate work samples and collections of work that demonstrate student learning about ethics. Although the goal of a liberal education should be to help students turn what they've learned in the classroom into action, pragmatically it would be difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether or not students would act ethically when faced with real ethical situations. What can be evaluated using a rubric is whether students have the intellectual tools to make ethical choices.

The rubric focuses on five elements: Ethical Self Awareness, Ethical Issue Recognition, Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, Application of Ethical Principles, and Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts. Students' Ethical Self Identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues. Presumably, they will choose ethical actions when faced with ethical issues.

## Glossary

*The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.*

- **Core beliefs:** Those fundamental principles that consciously or unconsciously influence one's ethical conduct and ethical thinking. Even when unacknowledged, core beliefs shape one's responses. Core beliefs can reflect one's environment, religion, culture or training. A person may or may not choose to act on their core beliefs.
- **Ethical perspectives/concepts:** The different theoretical means through which ethical issues are analyzed, such as ethical theories (e.g., utilitarian, natural law, virtue) or ethical concepts (e.g., rights, justice, duty).
- **Complex, multi-layered (gray) context:** The sub-parts or situational conditions of a scenario that bring two or more ethical dilemmas (issues) into the mix/problem/context/for student's identification.
- **Cross-relationships among the issues:** Obvious or subtle connections between/among the sub-parts or situational conditions of the issues present in a scenario (e.g., relationship of production of corn as part of climate change issue).