

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

DIRECTED SELF PLACEMENT:

FIRST-YEAR WRITING (2021-2022)

DEPARTMENT OF WRITING STUDIES, RHETORIC, AND
COMPOSITION

HOW WRITING PLACEMENT WORKS AT RWU:

All students entering RWU must complete the online Directed Self Placement process in order to determine which WTNG class will best suit their needs. DSP is **not a test**, and does **not require a writing sample**: it will take approximately 10 minutes.

ALL RWU students take WTNG 102 in their first year, and then a 200 or 300 level course later.

SOME RWU students take WTNG 100 BEFORE entering WTNG 102, so they will take 3 rather than 2 WTNG courses. **If you select WTNG 100, be aware that you will still have to take WTNG 102 in the spring and an upper-level course as a sophomore.**

TO DETERMINE WHICH WTNG CLASS YOU SHOULD START WITH, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Read the course descriptions for WTNG 100 and WTNG 102 carefully so that you understand what each offers you as a college student who needs to write successfully in a variety of classes and contexts.

2. Review the sample assignments from a variety of courses across campus to see the kinds of writing that will be required of you. Courses represented by sample assignments include Anthropology, Web Development, American Studies, and Engineering.

3. Reflect on Your Writing Abilities and click on the link to take the placement survey - Take a brief self-survey to reflect on your experience with academic writing.

4. Select one of the following courses to take

- **WTNG 100** – This course offers extra support in critical reading and writing to help you develop a foundation for success in your upper level course work.
- **WTNG 102** – This course prepares students to launch confidently into upper level course work.

STEP 1: COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

WTNG 100 INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC WRITING

Focusing on the connection between reading and writing, this first year course emphasizes the understanding and production of academic arguments. In a series of increasingly complex assignments, students cultivate rhetorical and writing process knowledge as well as an understanding of the general expectations of the academic discourse community. Assignments focus on summary and analysis of academically oriented texts. Students must write a series of compositions, submit a satisfactory portfolio, and earn a C or higher in the course to enroll in WTNG 102.

IF YOU SELECT WTNG 100, YOU WILL HAVE THAT COURSE ON YOUR FALL SCHEDULE. YOU WILL THEN TAKE 102 IN THE SPRING, AND YOUR UPPER- LEVEL COURSE IN YOUR SOPHOMORE YEAR.

WTNG 102: HOW WRITING WORKS

This first year course helps students develop a conceptual map of how writing works by building their rhetorical and writing process knowledge and by fostering genre and discourse community awareness. Students draft a minimum of four revised essays and complete a course portfolio. Students must submit a satisfactory portfolio and earn a C or higher in the course in order to enroll in 200 or 300 level writing courses.

STUDENTS WHO SELECT WTNG 102 WILL HAVE THE COURSE IN EITHER THE FALL OR SPRING SEMESTER OF THEIR FIRST YEAR, to be followed by an upper-level writing course later.

STEP 2: SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Read these sample assignments. What do they ask of you as a reader? What do they ask of you as a writer?

Sample Assignment #1

Synthesis Paper 1 - ANTH 100.02

Description: The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of perspectives and vocabulary in cultural anthropology and to synthesize information covered in Chapters 1-4 in *Essentials of Cultural Anthropology* (Guest 2018). The assignment asks you to write a short review of the Karrebaek (2012) article on conversations about healthy lunch choices in a multicultural school in Copenhagen. A review is more than a summary, in that it discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the research discussed in the article with respect to its quality and value to anthropology and society.

Directions: Read the Karrebaek (2012) article, which is posted on Bridges. Homework questions and class discussion will help guide your notes on the content of the article. Then, write a review of Karrebaek's research and explain the ways in which this research is valuable to: students and professionals in cultural anthropology, education, and/or public health. You should also discuss some of the limits or weaknesses of Karrebaek's study, with respect to her limited capacity to make generalizations from the data she recorded.

Format of paper:

- Length – 2-3 pages
- 11 or 12-point font
- Double or 1.5 line spacing
- Put your name and the date at the top of the page
- Body of the paper should be written 3rd person style and include in-text citations
- Reference list should go at the end of your paper. You do not need a separate page for it.
- Save the paper as a Word or PDF document. Label the file with your last name.

Suggestions for the content of your review:

- Start with a thesis statement about the ways this research contributes to anthropology, education, and/or public health
- Describe when and where the research took place, and who participated in the research.
- Explain the author's methods for collecting the data. Note what was good or creative about her research design.
- Summarize the results of the study in general (1 paragraph at most).
- Explain the complexities of this sociocultural context with respect to any of the following:
 - Cultural norms, values, symbols, mental maps of reality
 - Power, inequality, and bias
 - Globalization
 - Enculturation and socialization
 - Sociolinguistics and the use of language in enculturation
 - Anything else you can connect to Chapters 1-4 in ECA

Sample Assignment #2

Web Development 206 - Prof. Al Cutting

The Web is becoming less and less about technology and more and more about content. Actually, it's always been about content. In days gone by, content just got overshadowed by the complexity of the technology.

I start the *Introduction to Web Development* course with an assignment asking each student to pick a topic for the website they would like to develop over the course of the semester.

- Go through these slides on how to Select a topic for your Website (<http://cuttingedgecourse.com/CIS206/Select%20a%20topic%20for%20your%20Web%20site.pptx>)
- Select a topic for your website and state the goal.

Next class, each student shares their topic and states the goal of their website. Here we look at why “display my work for everyone to see” is not a well-defined goal.

Students then read the first two sections of *How to Make a Better Website: A 6-step Designer-developer's Guide* (<https://blog.prototypr.io/how-to-make-a-better-website-a-designer-developers-guide-in-6-steps-f4434461ce56>). There are seven questions in the first section:

1. Who is the audience?
2. What problems do they have?
3. How will the website help solve those problems?
4. How will the solution be unique from other solutions out there?
5. What actions do we want the audience to take?
6. How will we measure the website's success?
7. How will we get visitors to site in the first place?

The first two are the most important. We discuss why “everyone” is not a good answer to #1. I introduce psychographics as well as demographics. We talk about developing a persona... why they are useful.

To help students frame the second question, they watch *Jobs-to-Be-Done - Prof. Clayton Christensen* (0:7:55) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q63PZR7mG70>). We discuss examples such as “what problems does a potential employer faced with a stack of resumes three feet tall have?” Your goal may be to get hired. The potential employer's ultimate goal may be to find just the right candidate. But their immediate problem might be something more like “How do I differentiate one candidate from another?” That may be the problem you want to help them solve.

After the students have “answered” the seven questions, more or less, I have them weave their answers into a narrative that they can incorporate into their website in a page titled “My Content Strategy.” In reality, content Strategy is much more complex, but this is an introductory course. And, who knows, their Content Strategy page might just be the differentiating factor *that* potential employer is looking for...

Sample Assignment #3

American Studies 100 - Prof. Aaron Allen

Media Analysis Paper: 75 points possible; 17% of your final grade

In a 4-5page essay, students will draw upon course readings in order to analyze a selected piece of media of their choosing. This can be an episode of a television show, film, song, political cartoon, etc. In the paper, students will treat their selected source of media as a cultural object, analyzing the cultural significance of their selection. Students will consider the following questions: What ideas and beliefs are perpetuated or challenged in your selected media? In what ways are these ideas and beliefs presented? What does it say about the historical moment in which it is produced? How is it received by the consuming audience? What does this reception say about culture? To complete this assignment, it will be useful to revisit Douglass Kellner's multi-perspective approach to analyzing media from his essay, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture." Also, be sure to incorporate the cultural concepts we have discussed where appropriate.

Consider the following steps when completing this assignment:

1. Brainstorm ideas about the cultural significance of your media artifact by considering:
 - a. The production and political economy in which it is produced.
 - b. The themes that are represented in it.

2. Write the introduction to your paper. Be sure to include the following:
 - a. A brief, general description of the media artifact.
 - b. A thesis statement about both the overall cultural message of your chosen outfit, both in terms of presentation and production.
 - c. A statement about the overall significance of your argument.

3. In writing the body of your essay, be sure to use both a textual analysis of the specific visual, aural elements. In doing so you will be discussing the cultural meaning and significance of your media artifact.

4. Do not forget a solid conclusion that summarizes your main argument!

Due Friday, November 30 by 11:55pm on bridges

STEPS 3 and 4: REFLECT ON YOUR WRITING ABILITIES AND TAKE PLACEMENT SURVEY

Follow the survey link below to reflect on yourself as a writer and to select the most appropriate writing course for you.

AS YOU MAKE YOUR SELECTION, REMEMBER:

- **BOTH WTNG COURSES OFFER A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS.**
- **WTNG 100 FOCUSES HEAVILY ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN READING AND WRITING. IF YOU HAVE TO WORK HARD ON YOUR READING HABITS, OR IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF YOUR SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS, THEN WTNG 100 WILL BE USEFUL.**
- **IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE ALREADY A FAIRLY STRONG READER, AND YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT AND TOPIC SENTENCES, THEN YOU SHOULD PROBABLY SELECT WTNG 102.**

Survey link - http://rwu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cuPX2j33fAdJl2e

Be sure to remember which course you selected (WTNG100 or WTNG102)!

If you have any questions about WTNG placement or this process, please contact me, Prof. Christian Pulver at cpulver@rwu.edu. My goal is to make sure each incoming student has a positive and productive experience with writing at RWU, so if you feel uncertain about your choice or this process, please let me know.