

Introduction to the CO150 Common Syllabus (<https://composition.colostate.edu/gtaccommon1819/>)

This course does not have a syllabus in a single file. The course description is below and further details are available on the website listed above.

WELCOME to teaching CO150, a CO-2 transfer course in Colorado

CO150 is a fully transferable Intermediate Composition course, transferring to other public institutions in Colorado as CO-2 (Intermediate Composition) and preparing students at CSU for Advanced Composition (CO-3). CO150 develops students' close and critical reading skills as well as their ability to write for varied contexts. Taking a rhetorical approach to writing instruction, CO150 offers a highly portable approach to writing, which is to say that the objectives of CO150 reach beyond preparing students for successful writing in the academic setting at CSU or at another university. A rhetorical approach provides students with a set of approaches for evaluating any communication situation, from the academic to the professional to the public, by focusing on the careful evaluation of audience, purpose, and occasion or opportunity for writing. If students can learn the strategies and tools associated with a rhetorical approach, they will likely go far as communicators. We urge you to explore and amplify the relevance of a rhetorical approach throughout the semester so that students develop a deepening understanding of the model's relevance to their future reading and writing needs.

The vast majority of students who come to CSU as first-year students place into CO150, which means that the course serves a wide range of students, some of whom have written extensively in high school and elsewhere and some of whom have not. CO150 is offered in small sections, which is that rarest of commodities in the large public university. Small sections make it possible to address the individual needs of the varied students who come to the course; it is therefore a working assumption that the course provides opportunity for close work between teacher and student, including substantial, frequent, timely, and focused feedback on writing and face to face student-teacher conferences done during office hours.

Objectives of the course

Your syllabus/policy statement must address student learning outcomes (relating to written competency), content criteria appropriate for the course level, and a statement from the Colorado Department of Higher Education saying that the course transfers across the state. All instructors of CO150 are required to use *the precise language* provided by the State of Colorado for articulating this information as shown at this link. Please look especially at the information beneath the heading that is in red font: <https://composition.colostate.edu/teachers/>

The Colorado Department of Higher Education randomly selects syllabi to ensure that they provide this information *at the beginning* of the syllabus. They will reject a syllabus that does not include all of this information or that places it somewhere other than at the beginning. We are also not allowed to simply link to this information. The good news is that the content criteria and competency standards were developed by disciplinary experts in writing and were agreed to be writing teachers across the state and nation.

The Hierarchy of Rhetorical Concerns

We reinforce the rhetorical approach to writing by mirroring it in our instruction and evaluation of writing. We provide prioritized feedback on student writing, evaluating that writing according to a hierarchy of concerns as interwoven rhetorical components. We refer broadly to this as the “hierarchy of rhetorical concerns.”

To help students learn as quickly as possible, and to be consistent with research on the teaching of writing, we prioritize giving feedback on higher order concerns first, such as audience and purpose rather than grammar and mechanics; this prioritization is concretely reflected when we restrain ourselves from editing student work until it is ready for sentence-level proofing. Such an approach may seem counterintuitive to you since it may seem that writing ability is built from the bottom up, but research on the teaching of writing has demonstrated that focusing on higher order concerns is a more effective way of catalyzing the college-level thinking of our students and engendering improvement in their writing. We focus our guidance for revision on prioritized concerns, too, so that in a fully polished piece of writing, lower order concerns relating to style and mechanics actually derive from higher order concerns such as audience and purpose. Careful analysis of audience and purpose can lead to informed decisions about register, word choice, and citation standards, among other things.

Why we have a topic and why that topic is FOOD-ENERGY-WATER

For many years we have chosen a general subject for CO150 and developed a reader that anthologizes articles and chapters from varied sources in order to focus and to accelerate student thinking and learning. Recent subjects for CO150 have included “rhetoric of green,” “internet and social media,” and “ethics in higher education.” This year the topic is Food, Energy and Water (hence the F-E-W reader). Our readers bring together sources from varied perspectives, and we do our best to include CSU researchers/scholars among our collected readings since the so-called “food-energy-water nexus” is central to the land grant mission of our university.

We hope that the course topic will prove generative of inquiry that is of interest to your students, perhaps even spurring interest in a major or a minor. While some might argue for unencumbered freedom in terms of student selection of topics, our centralized selection of a broad topic that starts students off with shared resources allows us to better assist students with close and critical reading and with focusing their writing.

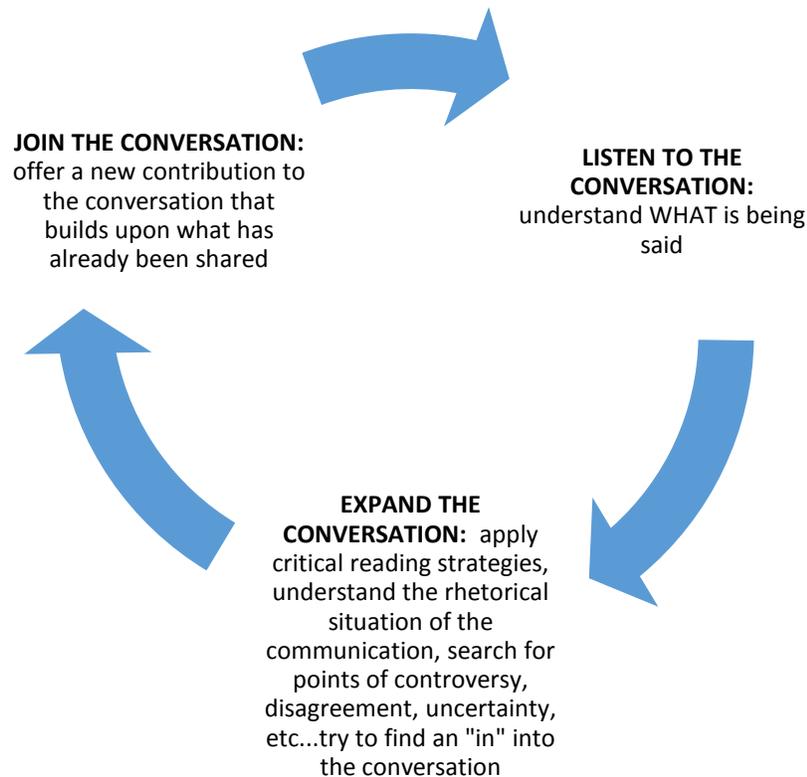
What students gain from CO150

It may be helpful to let your students know that first-year enrollment in CO150 is the #1 predictor of student success at CSU, as measured by the probability of completing a degree in 4-6 years. If your students take both CO150 and their math requirement in the first year, their chances go up even higher for completing in 4-6 years. Indeed, both retention (return for the second year of college) and persistence (completion of a degree) are predicted by CO150’s successful completion. Perhaps just as importantly, the ability to grasp and appreciate others’ perspectives and where those ideas come from, to risk new ideas and perspectives rather than to only ratify existing ones that are already held, to be

able to both read and write with an understanding of context, to develop the ability to generate various genres of writing, to understand one's own writing and revision processes, including giving feedback to a peer, and to be able find, select, and use sources from a major university library are all key skills and threshold concepts of a college education.

The conversation metaphor and the assignment sequence

Our custom e-book was authored by CSU's own Mike Palmquist and combines and condenses his two books, *Joining the Conversation* and *The Bedford Researcher*. The textbook, which can be purchased and read via the course management system, CANVAS, uses the following metaphor to describe the sequencing of the course and assignments.



This Conversation Model provides us with an overarching way of understanding the sequence of the course. We begin by listening to existing conversations, practicing close and critical reading as a way of understanding what others have to say on a topic. In this part of the course, we emphasize that it isn't enough to know only WHAT is being said, students also must know HOW/WHY it is being said, which requires critical reading and thinking. Critical reading and thinking are guided by the fundamental concept of the rhetorical situation in CO150. There are many ways to critically examine a text, but understanding the rhetorical situation, or the context of the text, is central to it all.

Once students can articulate a few of the many conversations or topical discussion on a broad subject within the course topics of food, energy, and water, we then ask them to identify a particular area of interest that they would like to investigate further. They examine the issue and write a proposal for addressing it.

Then students undertake independent research on a topic within the broad category of food, conducting library research, identifying, evaluating, and selecting sources found in the large public university library. They write a researched argumentative paper based on their own analysis of the issue as informed by the sources they have selected. They demonstrate that they can cite sources using academic citation standards. Finally, students spend the last weeks of the course reflecting on the writing they've done, the feedback they received, and the learning they have experienced in order to write a final portfolio that addresses revision of previous work.

Final Words

Most of your students will be first-year college students (formerly known as “freshmen”). They will internalize a great many lessons in their first year, but among the most important may be this: that in college they have the opportunity and agency to make decisions for themselves and in doing so on papers and in class they begin to define who they are as students. They must ask themselves if they are up to the task, and in time you will see that some are not quite there yet. First year students must learn a lot about taking responsibility for themselves. Such lessons extend well beyond the content of any particular course yet they underlie the challenge presented by every college course. It is arguably nowhere more visible, however, than in first-year composition because with a small class, students and teachers must negotiate dynamics. As a teacher, you will come to understand the complexities of your students' lives in ways that faculty who teach large classes may never know. Part of your journey will involve learning your own strategies for holding students to the high standards of the course while also being a reasonable, even compassionate, human being. All of us who are involved with composition administration will be at your side ready to assist with this challenge!

In the pages that follow, you will find the assignment sheets for the major written assignments, materials to assist with your teaching, daily lesson plans for the first seven weeks of class, and weekly lesson plans for the weeks 8-16.

Best of luck and thank you in advance for all the good work you will do for CSU students!