Reading and Writing for Purpose Course Syllabus

What you will learn in this course

Reading and Writing for Purpose

This course will introduce you to useful, real-world information by learning to read legal, insurance, employment, and vehicle related documents. You will also explore media bias, trends in journalism, word structures, and research strategies while developing critical reading skills, outline building skills, and identifying good sources of information. This course builds life and study skills, setting you up for success as an adult and post-secondary preparation.

Unit 1: Navigating the Information Age

Writing is a form of power, a tool of change and persuasion that can be motivated by everything from economic gain to personal pleasure. Those who do not carefully examine what they see, read, and hear are ultimately left to the mercy of those who wield the camera, the pen, or the tweet. For that reason, one of the most powerful skills you can learn is to critically read and understand everything you encounter. In this unit, you'll begin to arm yourself with the knowledge needed to interpret information for yourself, navigate the complex challenges of real life, and use your voice for change.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify why critical reading is an important life skill
- Learn strategies for implementing critical reading into your life
- Understand the differences between the types of writing and communication
- Examine how motivation and purpose changes the way we communicate
- Discuss how people get information in the digital age and how that contrasts with previous generations

Unit 2: Information for the Masses

Can color choice convince you to choose one bank over the other or get you to go for that clearance buy? Can good journalists make the world better for those of us who live in it? Can fake news affect an election? In an increasingly information-focused culture, the types of information you encounter and, most importantly, your understanding of the messages and purpose of that communication can make all the difference. Learn how to cut through the chaos to get to the heart of a few key questions about any piece of material you encounter: What is the message? Who is the audience? What is the purpose? Is that a trusted source? When you can answer these questions, you will have a real advantage that can help you make decisions wisely.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Understand how the elements of visual texts convey meaning

- Describe how news and journalism have changed and the challenges those changes have created
- Identify the ideals at the heart of good journalism and how they work in practice
- Examine media bias and its potential for real world effects, especially in politics
- Explain what "fake news" is and strategies to avoid being manipulated by it

Unit 3: Reading In the Real World

What happens when all that scrolling and Googling has real-life implications? Reading critically, especially in real world situations, can feel challenging, especially if you are overwhelmed. But those same critical reading skills that help you wade through information to find what's most relevant for you and allow you to see beyond even the most enticing persuasion to focus on the task in front of you can also give you the upper hand when you have to make important decisions. Now let's take those skills that you're learning and put them to work, exploring, researching, and analyzing a real-life problem: relocating thousands of miles away for a great job. You'll get a glimpse inside real world documents and contracts, practicing the skills you need to navigate one of the most exciting of life's events.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify good sources for official information and understand how to use that information to accomplish goals
- Narrow your research questions to determine neighborhoods, budget, and potential housing options
- Analyze rental ads and rental applications to ensure understanding
- Read and understand utility bills, with the goal of saving as much money as possible
- Navigate the process of establishing legal residency

Unit 4: The First Day on the Job

When you're starting your brand-new dream job, what can you expect? The first few days will probably feel like you're experiencing an avalanche of paperwork—but what does it all mean and how can you make sure you're making the right decisions? You'll take the critical reading skills you've been building and apply them to real work situations, learning how to navigate complicated questions. You'll learn about benefits, retirement, taxes, and federal workplace protections, among other topics, by examining the documents you're most likely to encounter in an employee orientation.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify key workplace documents, understanding their place in your day-to-day duties
- Use strategies for reading to help understand new and complex information
- Analyze new documents based on previous knowledge and understanding
- Understand how to navigate an employee handbook, including how to find policies and procedures related to your workplace
- Describe how different types of writing applies to the workplace

Reading and Writing for Purpose Midterm Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from the first four units in this course (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

Unit 5: Signing on the Dotted Line

One of the most complex reading assignments you may ever have will come when you are ready to make a significant legal or financial decision. In those moments, with contracts in front of you and decisions to make, the fine print and the clauses and addendums may feel more intimidating than you'd like. You'll learn how to use the complicated documents you'll encounter to your advantage, employing critical reading strategies and the use of information to make smart, savvy decisions. Being bold in your reading, questioning, and analyzing can actually transform your questions into power when it's time to sign on the dotted line.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Employ strategies to read and understand complex legal and financial documents
- Describe the basic structure of words in order to decode them, including root words, affixes, and etymology
- Explore key documents related to essential transactions to answer questions and guide decisions
- Distinguish between important and unimportant information based on needs and goals

Unit 6: Changing the World Through Writing

Working your way through a world of texts does not just happen as a consumer. Though it's essential to learn how to critically read and understand the text you'll encounter in your daily life, it's equally important to learn how to use your own voice to create change and solve problems in your own life. When you encounter an issue in your own community, using your voice to advocate for change is a powerful way to change the world. Your first steps in creating that change comes in identifying a problem, researching that problem to understand it thoroughly, and harnessing your ideas to present it persuasively. Using strategies for all three of these steps can make your voice more powerful and effective.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Use graphic organizers to harness and plan ideas
- Adapt ideas to a specific type of writing, which focuses on defining and proposing a solution to a problem
- Identify the common challenges associated with problem-solving writing modes
- Synthesize, summarize, and analyze reliable source material
- Utilize strategies for reading research material to maximize efficiency

Unit 7: Moving from Ideas to an Action Plan

You've found a problem that you want to solve and you've done the preliminary research. But ideas are just ideas until you put them into action. In this case, that means taking that initial planning and turning it into a draft. One of the most important stages of proposal writing is the planning and drafting stages, as these stages serve as the bridge between your ideas and real change in your community. When your ideas are clear, focused on your audience, and well-supported, your voice can make a real difference.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Understand the importance of outlining based on the structure of your argument
- Organize your ideas and initial research into a thorough outline
- Explain the purpose of the introduction and thesis statement
- Analyze your audience to determine their concerns and address those concerns in your draft
- Use figurative language, syntax, and style to persuade your audience that your proposal is logical and feasible

Unit 8: The Final Countdown

One of the least popular steps in the well-known writing process is the revision step. This can be the hardest one, like the last few miles of a marathon. You think you've hit the wall, but the best and most important steps are yet to come. It's time to gather your strength and your creativity and take one more in-depth look at your writing. Your goal is clear: Convince your audience that you've found a problem that needs a solution and that you've found the way to solve it. Can you convey those ideas to that audience in the best, strongest way possible? Let's walk through the final steps, to make sure that you can be proud of your final product.

What will you learn in this unit?

- Identify the two types of revision
- Develop a strategy for revising your own work
- Analyze structural elements based on how well they meet assignment requirements
- Evaluate word choice and style to ensure that your ideas are being communicated well
- Understand how your argument creates inferences in the reader's mind

Reading and Writing for Purpose Final Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from units five to eight in this course – the last four units. (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)