Guidelines for New General Education Instructors

Tweens and Teens and Youth Cultures

General Education courses are designed primarily for first and second year students. They emphasize skill development and the acquisition of critical competencies like information literacy, critical thinking and communications skills. They are not introductions to any discipline. Instructors need to remember that the content in our Gen Ed classes is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Engaging students and promoting active learning

- Keep lecture and instructor presentation to a minimum
- Create activities that engage all students in the material with a focus on conceptual thinking
- Arrange your classroom to foster interaction and participation (not desks in rows)
- Check for understanding regularly (through homework, quizzes, etc.) and reteach as necessary.
- Motivate students to read and watch videos by requiring response papers, homework questions, or presentations.
- Monitor discussions, keeping students on track but without cutting off participation
- Make discussions purposeful (to answer questions, reach conclusions, promote insight or understanding).
- Provide alternative ways for students to participate besides simply speaking in class (response papers, discussion board, blogs, etc.)
- Develop strategies for prompting students to move from concrete and specific to more abstract thinking and to master ideas not just memorize information.
- Check the instructor site for ideas about in-class activities.

Responding to student drafts

This course is organized so that students submit draft sections of their research project, receive feedback and have an opportunity to revise. This well researched pedagogy results in much higher quality work at the end of the semester. The test of a good response to a draft is the quality of the student’s revision. Was the student able to follow the advice you gave in your feedback and use it to clarify his/her thinking and strengthen
the writing? If not, you need to get feedback on your feedback. Try sharing responses with other instructors to see if another instructor understands your expectations and could follow your advice.

- Treat drafts as works in progress.
- Give customized advice based on what you know about each student.
- Do not edit or correct mistakes. Describe problems and ask student to make corrections.
- Highlight what is well and appropriately done and responsive to course and assignment guiding questions.
- Don’t overwhelm the student with comments. Prioritize what they need to do.
- If the draft is graded, make good feedback your highest priority and rationalize the grade separately
- Tell the student in concrete terms what to do to make the draft stronger (don’t just say it needs to be better organized but say the paragraphs don’t follow from one another or there is no relationship between the beginning and the end).
- For ELLs, tell them to have a native speaker read their work for them.

Grading criteria (for final research project)
Critical thinking (Are they able use their data and sources as evidence to enable them to draw appropriate conclusions?)
Information literacy (Have they located credible sources? Do they integrate their sources into their papers?)
Thinking like a social scientist (Are they able to avoid bias and identify as a researcher?)
Knowledge of subcultures (based largely on Haenfler book, sociological perspective)
Knowledge of chosen subculture (appropriate understanding of race, class, gender, media influence, relationship with dominant culture, rebelliousness, what makes it a subculture, etc.)
Integration of course material and vocabulary (Do they use course vocabulary correctly and in a way that demonstrates understanding of concepts and theory?)
Ability to make connections and draw conclusions

Grading
Expect to have a reasonable distribution of grades
Don’t be surprised if some students don’t attend and if some students fail
Be clear about grading criteria and expectations
Do not grade for effort but for quality of work
SEE GRADING RUBRIC for SPECIFIC GUIDELINES