

# Sample Scaffold of Undergraduate Research in a Department of English Curriculum

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## 200-Level Writing Course

- Write 5-6 essays that use a variety of rhetorical strategies to address a variety of audiences and purposes. (Assignments might include two 2-3-page, two 4-5-page, and two 5-7-page required essays.)
- Articulate “risk-taking” thesis statements and develop them with research evidence and well-organized, logical reasoning.
- Conduct a research and writing process with each essay that includes locating secondary sources with the assistance of the instructor and/or a reference librarian, taking research notes, prewriting, drafting, seeking peer review, revising, editing, and proofreading.

## 200-Level Literature Course (gateway-to-major course)

- Facilitate, in a small group, several class meetings on a particular literary work, providing (in successive class meetings) the author’s biography and information about the critical conversation surrounding the text, including identifying one pertinent critical article.
- Summarize a critical article (assigned by the instructor) in 2-3 pages.
- In consultation with the instructor, locate at least two secondary sources relevant to student-selected essay topic (utilizing disciplinary databases, interlibrary loan, and/or library print sources).
- Write a 5-7-page critical analysis that employs the secondary source material as support for the argument.

## 300-Level Writing Courses

- Conduct primary/field research in the form of an interview.
- Write a 6-10-page creative nonfiction essay about the interview subject.
- Locate and utilize film reviews and/or other critical analyses of a film that has had a significant cultural impact in some part of the world.
- Write a 6-8-page critical analysis of the film that utilizes reviews and secondary analyses.

## 300-Level Literature Courses

- Locate 3-5 secondary sources relevant to a student-selected essay topic (utilizing disciplinary databases, interlibrary loan, and/or library print sources).
- Write a 6-8-page critical analysis that employs the secondary source material as support for the argument, as well as context and/or explanation of a counter argument.
- Demonstrate in the essay understanding of how the literary work fits into a larger literary and/or critical context.

## 400-Level Literature Seminars

- Write a proposal for a research essay based on literary analysis of one of the course readings.
- Locate several secondary sources relevant to the essay topic and its broader context.
- Create an annotated bibliography.
- Write a 10-12-page literary analysis that employs the secondary source material as support for the argument, as well as demonstration of alternate readings (counter arguments).

- Demonstrate in the essay understanding of how not only the literary work itself, but also the *analysis* of the work, fits into a larger literary and/or critical context.
- Integrate in the essay the skills of research, incorporation of secondary source material, awareness of engagement in a critical conversation, articulation of an argument of appropriate scope and depth, and use of sophisticated critical rhetoric.
- Demonstrate creativity/imagination and risk-taking by moving beyond the obvious, pursuing insights independent of material gleaned from class notes or standard reference works, and/or integrating insights in an independent way.

#### **400-Level Criticism/Theory Course**

- Write a critical history of one of the class readings. (This critical history may form the basis for the literary research essay later in the semester.)
- Write a proposal for a literary research essay that engages a theoretical notion or approach in some direct way (e.g., the body as a site for colonization, narrative agency, gender, etc.).
- Locate several secondary sources relevant to the essay topic and its broader context.
- Create an annotated bibliography.
- Write an 8-12-page critical history essay that extensively employs the secondary source material as the main grounding for the argument.
- Integrate in the essay the skills of research, incorporation of secondary source material, awareness of engagement in a critical conversation, articulation of an argument of appropriate scope and depth, and use of sophisticated critical rhetoric.
- Demonstrate creativity/imagination and risk-taking by moving beyond the obvious, pursuing insights independent of material gleaned from class notes or standard reference works, and/or integrating insights in an independent way.
- Create an abstract of the essay.
- Participate in an essay “defense” with the instructor and classmates.

#### **400-Level Senior Thesis Course**

- Meet the assignment goals of the 400-level seminars and criticism/theory course, including creating a proposal and annotated bibliography, at a higher level of mastery and for an independently chosen topic. (The thesis can be an expansion of an earlier class paper or it can tackle a work not assigned in any class.)
- Conduct a semester-long, independent research process, mentored by the senior-thesis instructor, leading to a 20-25-page thesis.
- Write a senior thesis that integrates both *literary analysis* based on close reading and *critical history* that demonstrates command of the literary work’s historical and analytical context.
- Participate in a thesis defense with the English department faculty.