**Questions to Help Further Your Understanding of the**

**Department of Writing Arts Core Values**

**Background**

Key to writing the Analysis Statement for Portfolio Seminar is for you to *demonstrate your understanding of the core values of the Writing Arts major*, and to demonstrate that understanding *using specific textual evidence drawn from five samples of your own writing*.

Each of the nine core values, as you will see below, have three measurable outcomes the faculty have designed, and the objectives of Writing Arts courses are meant to support you in achieving these outcomes. Depending on the student outcomes intended for you to produce in a Writing Arts course, a given core value may be introduced, emphasized, and/or reinforced. As you read through the core values, outcomes, and questions, consider carefully which pieces you will include in your portfolio. Keep in mind that there are no perfect performances; there will always be gaps between our intentions and what we actually accomplished. You are called upon in this Analysis Statement to acknowledge these gaps and articulate them in your writing of the statement. Seeing where you failed is as important, if not more so, than noting where you succeeded.

Toward the end of triggering you to reflect, we have developed questions designed to assist you in the process of writing your analysis statement. Derived from the values and their outcomes, these questions will challenge you in two ways: they will challenge you to think through (on the pages of your statement) each of the department’s core values and correlative outcomes, doing so with depth, nuance, and completeness; and these questions will challenge you to ground your understanding of each value using evidence drawn from your five specific writing projects included in your portfolio.

While responding to these questions will allow you to generate material to include in your analysis statement, you will likely not include *all* of your responses, and you may not necessarily organize your discussion to mirror the sequence of the questions below. You will need to make writerly decisions concerning what to include and what to exclude, and how to arrange the document to fulfill its purpose: to demonstrate to your audience (a member of the Writing Arts faculty) your understanding of the core values through reflecting on your writing, whether or not you were successful in your writing projects. To this end, discuss with your Writing Arts advisor what an acceptable page length would be for you.

Core values are written in blue. Expected student outcomes are written in green. Each core value has three outcomes that are, depending on the course, introduced, emphasized, or reinforced in the work of the course itself. Questions are written in italicized black.

**Overview of the core values**

The Writing Arts faculty asserts that good writing reflects the core values of the Writing Arts major, and that such writing goes well beyond mere visible markings: writing employs multiple technologies to create meaning and as a result, writing makes a difference. The practice of writing given by the core values calls upon the writer to think critically, to be receptive to the writing situation and audience, to rhetorically adapt to the genre they are writing within, and to write with a creative purpose. Given the potential impact writing may have, professional writers are responsible for the power they exercise in the deliberate and researched choices they make. Therefore, the Writing Arts Department values the following for students in the Writing Arts Program:

Value 1: Writing Arts students will demonstrate understanding of a variety of genre conventions and exhibit rhetorical adaptability in applying those conventions.

Student Outcomes for value 1:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate an understanding of genre and the variety of conventions employed within a given genre.

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate how they have rhetorically adapted to write within a given genre through following and challenging the variety of conventions used within that genre.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate some degree of mastery of multiple genres of writing (as expressed in the corresponding conventions), as well as some degree of flexibility when adapting conventions of a given genre to situation, purpose, and audience.

Questions for value 1:

* *Based on what you have learned in your classes (class discussions, academic articles and books, writing assignments, etc.), how would you define “genre”? What genres have you written in? What are the features that distinguish a given genre?*

* *Within a given genre, what is a “convention”? What variety of conventions comprise a given genre you have written within?*

* *How do you understand the term “rhetorical adaptability”? How have you had to adapt rhetorically to take up the variety of conventions used within a given genre? To what degree have you resisted adapting rhetorically to the purposes and conventions, the style and substance, a given genre invites the writer to take up and write with? What struggles have you worked through concerning the generic expectations audiences project onto your writing within a given genre?*

* *How do your portfolio selections demonstrate your attempts to rhetorically adapt to writing within various genres, and with what degree of expertise have you done so (or failed to do so)? In what ways have you challenged the genre conventions you wrote within?*

* *What relationship do you see between genre and other elements of the rhetorical situation (audience/purpose/context/writer)? How has the awareness of that relationship impacted the genre choices included in your portfolio?*

Value 2: Writing Arts students will understand theories of writing and reading and be able to apply them to their own writing.

Student Outcomes for value 2:

Outcome 1: Students will approach an understanding of “theory” through studying and applying theories of reading and writing grounded in the field of creative writing.

Outcome 2: Students will approach an understanding of “theory” through studying and applying theories of reading and writing grounded in the field of rhetoric and writing studies.

Outcome 3: Students will approach an understanding of “theory” through studying and applying theories of reading and writing grounded in the field of technical and professional writing.

Note: depending on which area you have specialized or concentrated in, you will likely only have produced two of these three outcomes (one and two, or two and three). Therefore, you need not demonstrate having achieved all three outcomes.

Questions for value 2:

* *What is theory? What theories of reading and writing have you encountered in your course work, and in particular, while writing the works included in the portfolio? What are the key terms and definitions that comprise the theory?*

* *In your courses, you are often introduced to theories of reading and writing through the readings. Which authors introduced the theories/methods to you, and how did you develop your understanding of a given theory, its key terms, and correlative method? Which writers have impacted your writing most, and how is this reflected in writings included in your portfolio? Where in your portfolio do you apply or model some of these theories and concepts?*

* *How have theories of reading and writing, and their key terms—for example, writing in-scene, exposition, reflection, intertextuality, remediation, denotation/connotation, voice, character, story, plot, image, register—influenced your writing, as evidenced in your portfolio?*

Value 3: Writing Arts students will demonstrate the ability to critically read complex and sophisticated texts in a variety of subjects.

Student Outcomes for value 3:

Outcome 1: Students will notice and question the limits imposed by their initial point of view when approaching a given text, allowing them to think through the moving parts of a text, to understand and articulate the purpose behind its design, the targeted audience, and the context the text responds to.

Outcome 2: Students will be able to bring critical perspectives into conversation with a given text.

Outcome 3: Students will be able to evaluate how to incorporate the conventions and the knowledge gained from critically reading such texts into their own writing.

Note: While we would like this response to be specific--citing and then reading (on the page) key works, including those both within and outside your Writing Arts program--you do not need to draw from your portfolio pieces in discussing this.

Questions for value 3:

* *What complex and sophisticated texts have you encountered in the Writing Arts major? What does it mean for a text to be complex and sophisticated? In what ways did your initial perspective limit your encounter with a text, and what new reading strategies did you employ to comprehend, analyze and ultimately critique these texts?*

* *What does it mean to read a text critically? (note: being “critical” does not merely mean “finding what is wrong” with a given text, as that is what your initial perspective directs you to do when first reading a text. Rather, think of being “critical” as “discerning wisely” while taking into account more than one perspective)*

* *What is your reading strategy when you encounter texts that offer contradictory approaches or positions on an issue? How are you able to bring such texts into conversation with one another? What are the results of such a conversation?*

* *In what ways has your reading supported and/or challenged your writing? What methods have you practiced from your reading that you can apply to your writing? What organizational or stylistic or generic approaches encountered in your readings have you been able to apply to your writing?*

* *In what ways—for example, through your free electives—have you furthered your knowledge base through intensive study of a subject(s)?*

* *In what ways has being well-read in a variety of genres been important to your development as a writer?*

* *In what ways have you become a more analytical and critical reader as a result of Writing Arts courses?*

Value 4: Writing Arts students will be able to investigate, discover, evaluate, and incorporate information in the creation of text.

Student Outcomes for value 4:

Outcome 1: Students will articulate appropriate research questions that challenge them to generate new knowledge for themselves and others, and they will employ a range of strategies to investigate these questions, as well as begin to discover, evaluate, and incorporate material into their writing.

Outcome 2: Students will learn what it means to discover relevant information, sources, direct observations, and other assets in a variety of modes, and to evaluate these materials for their appropriateness to the genre and purpose at hand.

Outcome 3: Students will effectively evaluate information, sources, direct observations, and other assets, determining their value for use within a given project, while adhering to principles and practices of ethics, honesty, and fair use when incorporating the writing of others.

Questions for value 4:

* *What do the terms “investigate,” “discover,” “evaluate,” and “incorporate” mean? What is the relationship between these stages of research and how did you experience these stages in your own research? How does your portfolio reflect your ability to investigate, discover, evaluate, and incorporate information?*

* *In what ways has the research process allowed you to cultivate appropriate, informed, and complex research questions beyond commonplace questions serious researchers have abandoned?*
* *Throughout all the stages of research (investigating, discovering, evaluating, and incorporating material into your project), in what ways were your prejudices (what you already knew and believed) challenged? How did the research process assist you in moving into a larger conversation with multiple and divergent voices?*

* *What are the varieties of information generated through research that you have incorporated into your writing? What strategies did you draw upon when including multiple kinds of texts and perspectives in a single conversation? How did your understanding of ethos help you draw upon and situate sources differently?*

* *How do you investigate, discover, evaluate, and incorporate information in different contexts? For instance, how does research for a piece of fiction differ from the research required for an academic piece, or from a piece of creative nonfiction?*

* *How has awareness of new information technologies broadened your access to diverse sources? And how have you incorporated the use of these technologies into your research? For instance, how might Google (or other search engines) have played a different role in your research processes compared with library databases or even crowdsourcing?*

Value 5: Writing Arts students will demonstrate self-critical awareness of their writing.

Student Outcomes for value 5:

Outcome 1: Students will understand what it means to be self-critical: to discern wisely what works and what doesn’t work within a given piece of their own writing.

Outcome 2: Students will be able to closely read and evaluate their writing, allowing them to acknowledge limits to their writing, opening them up to high order concerns within writing processes, such as 1) rhetorical strategies in response to context, purpose, and audience; 2) organization; 3) style; 4) genre; 5) intertextuality; and 6) research.

Outcome 3: Students will be able to articulate decisions made in all stages of the writing process in terms of (1) rhetorical strategies used to address a specific audience with a guiding purpose to respond to a given context; (2) organization; (3) style, diction, and syntax; (4) genre; (5) intertextuality; and (6) research.

Note: You may choose to use a series of drafts of a piece selected for the portfolio, as well as the social interaction (student and instructor feedback) that were essential to the process to explain the decisions you made in revising. Be specific, and use specific textual evidence.

Questions for value 5:

* *What is self-critical awareness? What does the term imply about reading and writing? How has your understanding of being “self-critical” developed over the course of the major, or even during a specific course, and especially within a piece selected for the portfolio?*

* *In what ways has your writing improved by bringing self-critical awareness to your writing? In reflecting on this, you could, for example, compare portfolio pieces from early and late in your Writing Arts career (pieces drawn from among the five in your portfolio), pointing out similar writerly moves in both, and then reveal how you developed the move further in the later piece. There are numerous possibilities to explore.*

* *How have instructor comments and peer feedback allowed you to better understand your own writing? What is the history of how you listen to feedback from peers and from instructors? How does the work or works in your portfolio speak to the changes you have undergone in the various ways you have regarded feedback, the various ways you took the feedback and applied it?*

* *How has analyzing and evaluating the writing of others allowed you to better critique your own writing? For instance, in observing certain writerly moves in a peer’s piece (or in a piece of published writing), you might begin to imagine, and then start making, a similar (or intentionally different) attempt in one of yours.*

* *What have you learned about how the quality of writing is determined? Why does rigorous evaluation of a text extend beyond personal taste to include a wider community? That is, we have personal criteria for evaluating writing, but if we adhere too closely to this criteria, we would get stuck in a rut, writing similarly sounding pieces of writing, even though we strive to expand our repertoire and write differently. Is that a matter of style and individual voice? Or is it a matter of creative and rhetorical thinking? A way of thinking that allows divergent perspectives to come together and converse, where the writer dances between these foes as equal advocate for each?*

Value 6: Writing Arts students will understand the impact evolving technologies have on the creation of written texts.

Student Outcomes for value 6:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate awareness of how developing technologies of writing impact the way writing gets produced, and also impact the adaptable identity of the writer writing with and within a given technology.

Outcome 2: Students will understand what it means to participate as a writer within digital publics, such that students will be able to develop a public, writerly, and ethically sound persona.

Outcome 3: Students will investigate how digital texts have impacted a variety of audiences and communities and will learn and practice ways to enter into rhetorically strategic dialogue--with a researched range of sources--as a member of a given digital public.

Questions for value 6:

* *What constitute technologies of writing? How have they evolved over time, both historically and recently and what significant impacts have these shifts had on the history of writing and how we write today?*

* *How has your understanding of writing and the composing process changed as a result of learning new technologies of writing? Have collaborative writing platforms influenced your understanding of writing as a social process, for instance? How is drafting, researching, revising changed within digital interfaces or in the making of digital texts?*

* *How has your sense of yourself as a writer expanded when you’ve been challenged to compose in different spaces (i.e. across platforms like the Adobe Creative Suite, Twitter, or Google Docs)? What has challenged or excited you about writing across modes like the visual or in audio?*
* *How have you cultivated concern for visual design and argument in your composition of digital texts? How has your understanding of the impact of the visual shifted your understanding of writing?*
* *What tactics have you developed for noticing and assessing the needs and expectations of various digital publics? For instance, how have you learned to read and interpret hashtags on Twitter or the rules governing a particular online gaming forum? How have those tactics helped you effectively write within and for those publics?*
* *In what ways has the public circulation of your writing across digital contexts shaped what you wanted to or found yourself able to say and how you composed your texts?*

* *How does the materiality of writing affect, in terms of constraints and possibilities, what you are able to produce as a writer, and who you are as a writer?*

* *How do the possibilities for your writing change—processes, audiences, genres, etc.—due to the technology with which you are writing?*

Value 7: Writing arts students will show an understanding of the power of the written word and that such power requires ethical responsibilities in its application.

Student Outcomes for value 7:

Outcome 1: Students will successfully demonstrate understanding their ethical responsibilities as writers writing within multiple contexts, including the role of the principles and practices of honesty as a necessary constraint when writing for a wide range of publics, including for the university.

Outcome 2: Students will grasp the ethical importance of honoring other perspectives and of negotiating their writerly role, with responsibility, within multiple publics as they are shaped by social contexts.

Outcome 3: Students will develop their understanding of the power of writing to shape reality, and that all ethical writers must own up to the impact of their writing, even in the form of unintended consequences.

Questions for value 7:

* *How does the value of the written word imply a relationship of power and responsibility? What do you understand by the term “ethics”?*
* *How have you understood the ways that power and social context shape everyday uses of writing? In what ways have you read others’ texts and adapted your own writing choices to your own role in contexts of power?*

* *What ethical responsibilities were you aware of as you wrote your portfolio pieces? Did you become aware of new responsibilities in the process of writing them?*

* *How do different writing spaces structure the ethical choices you make as a writer (online vs. print, fiction vs. nonfiction, academic vs. informal)?*

* *How has your understanding of authorship evolved during the program and how is it evidenced in your work?*

* *What role does your understanding of plagiarism play in your composing process (rhetorical choices, research methods, or citation strategies) and how is this reflected in your portfolio?*

* *How have collaborative settings (collaborative writing, peer review, workshops, group projects, etc.) influenced your writing practices and ethical decisions in a piece of writing included in your portfolio? What does it mean to be truthful and respectful when giving peers feedback, while also encouraging others to regard the workshop as a social space that allows for such communication?*

* *How has the theory of intertextuality revised your understanding of creativity, originality, authorship, and the power of the written word in a piece of writing included in your portfolio?*

* *How has new media affected ethical decisions you have faced when writing with digital writing technologies for particular audiences?*

Value 8: Writing Arts students will understand the rhetorical role of style in writing, including the dynamics of usage, mechanics, and grammar, dependent as they are on context, purpose, and audience.

Student Outcomes for value 8:

Outcome 1: Students will produce writing that follows common usage, grammar, and mechanics appropriate to the context, purpose, and audience of the given rhetorical situation.

Outcome 2: Students will understand the role of figural language--language that diverges from common usage--in writing effective prose, and will develop a repertoire of stylistic maneuvers available for use within multiple contexts, purposes, and audiences.

Outcome 3: Students will explore the relationship between style and the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of stylistic choices.

Questions for value 8:

* *How might common usage, grammar, and mechanics change relative to the rhetorical situation you are writing in response to, or to the genre (and the correlative conventions) you are writing within? What is your approach to discovering and revising grammatical, mechanical errors, or errors in common usage in your writing and in the writing of others, as reflected in pieces included in your portfolio? For example, multiple drafts might illustrate improvements to grammar, mechanics, and/or usage.*
* *What does it mean to shift from a relationship to language as “transparent” to language as “figural,” wherein you use language to “perform” rather than “describe”?*
* *How have you used stylistic figures in your writing to produce certain effects in your audience?*

* *How do different writing spaces structure the stylistic, grammatical, and mechanical choices you make as a writer (online vs. print, fiction vs. nonfiction, academic vs. informal)?*

* *How did the Elements of Language related elective help you to understand this core value?*

Value 9: Writing Arts students will have knowledge of the professions available to them or will be able to articulate how they will apply their understanding of writing in their future career, or both.

Student Outcomes for value 9:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate familiarity with professions and/or post-graduate studies involving writing, including with industry and/or academic stakeholders, such as agents and editors, and/or professors and administration, and how these stakeholders align with, support, and challenge, the working writer/teacher of writing.

Outcome 2: Students will be acquainted with the basic practices of presenting oneself in the world as a professional, informed by projects that extend beyond the work done in the Writing Arts major.

Outcome 3: Students will begin to generate a professional ethos that is skilled in rhetorically adapting to novel situations, in which they may create opportunities where none seemed to be.

Note: You do not need to draw from your portfolio pieces in discussing this value, but you should demonstrate knowledge gained from your experiences in the Writing Arts program.

Questions for value 9:

* *What does it mean to have a vision for your self as a professional writer/educator? What will your life be about after graduation, that is, what project or projects will you pursue, whether or not you immediately find work within a professional setting that supports your pursuit of that project? Who are, or who should be the principle stakeholders in fulfilling this project?*
* *Which of the core values—and the writerly skills and habits you have acquired together with the value—can you see bringing into professional contexts?*

* *How have you gained knowledge of the post-graduate options (professions, graduate studies, internships) available to you?*
* *What stakeholder roles have you encountered and developed working relationships with? What role or roles have you developed in the process? What does it mean to apply the knowledge necessary to playing these roles to a career following graduation?*

* *How has the Writing Arts program prepared you to work in a given area, either as a writer (creative/professional) or a teacher of writing (within the field of Education, or teaching within the University setting)?*

* *If you are also in education, how can you apply what you have learned in your Writing Arts classes to your teaching profession? How might you translate your practical understanding of writing and being a writing into pedagogical practices designed to teach writing to your target population of students?*

* *If you are also in education, how has the Writing Arts program prepared you for professional options outside teaching?*

Adopted September 2008/Revised 2009, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017