

## ENG 596: Exit Exam in Teaching of Writing

### COURSE GOALS

By the end of this course, students should have prepared and refined three exit papers that represent their abilities as master's level graduate students in the Teaching of Writing specialization. These papers should be of "publishable" quality; that is to say, these papers should be polished enough to be submitted to appropriate journal(s) in the field. (We do not require you to submit the papers to a journal, but we expect content and style to be at that level.) However, one of the goals of this culminating experience is to demonstrate your proficiency as a writer and emerging scholar/practitioner in the field.

### SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

The committee that supervises your exit work is composed of three members, who are selected by you with the approval of the TOW Faculty Advisor. You must choose two of these members from among the faculty in the Department of English Language and Literature who specialize in rhetoric and composition; you should ask one of these faculty members to be your chair. You may choose the other member of the committee from among the graduate faculty who teach other courses related to rhetoric and composition or from whom you've had a course that relates to your proposed papers.

You should select your committee as soon as possible—even before the semester in which you are registered for this course begins. Be sure to consult with the faculty advisor, as it is important that each faculty member not serve as chair for too many students in any one semester. Doing so is a disservice to you, your colleagues in the program, and the faculty member, as students receive less attention than they deserve and faculty members can become overwhelmed.

Once you have determined your committee, **you will need to complete the "Exit Exam Committee Form" available on the TOW website.** Have the form signed by all faculty involved, thus confirming their willingness to serve on your committee, and return it to the faculty advisor *no later than the end of the second week of the semester.*

### PAPER PREPARATION

Students in the TOW specialization will have created documents during their course work. English 596 gives students the opportunity to work with a faculty member to hone those pieces (or work on new ones) as well as analyze those documents as rhetorical artifacts.

This course acts much like an independent study would—you will set up a schedule with your chair as to when your papers are due. The following outlines the basic process that will occur:

- You will submit sections of your papers to your chair on dates agreed upon in advance.
- The chair will give you feedback on the documents and you will likely need to revise them. Remember that your chair will need at least two weekends to review and respond to your work.
- Once you and the chair believe that each paper is ready to be reviewed by the entire committee, he or she will distribute copies that you provide to the committee members for review.
- The committee will meet with you (either f2f, by phone, or as a last resort, by email) to discuss your work.
- Your committee will need about two weeks to read and respond to your work.
- After the committee members have reviewed your work, you will likely need to undertake additional revision.

- Submit your papers to the committee until they have agreed that the work meets the expectations of the TOW specialization.

## EXIT PAPER STRUCTURE

The focus and structure of your exit exam papers will be determined by you, your chair, and committee. Of course, documents vary, but on average, the committee would expect to see approximately 50-60 pages (15,000 words) of finished work, but this is a guideline, not a hard and fast rule. The papers should use peer-reviewed sources but may also incorporate other types of data such as interviews, surveys, oral histories, and the like. Projects employing qualitative or quantitative methodologies will have slightly different requirements for format.

We expect that students who graduate with an MA in English (Teaching of Writing specialization) will be able to write skilled academic prose; therefore, these papers should demonstrate that ability. We expect that students are able to use a citation style (either MLA or APA usually) competently. Tone should be appropriate for a scholarly academic paper. Students who wish to explore alternative academic discourse genres should discuss this issue with your committee members and make sure that all members agree to the student's plan.

Use the exit process as an opportunity to work with your chair and committee members not only on the ideas in your paper but also on your writing style. This kind of intense scrutiny of your own work affords you a rare opportunity to stretch yourself as a writer.

## GRADING/COMPLETING THE DEGREE

As current or future teachers of writing, you realize that the writing process is one that involves inventing, drafting, revising, editing, and polishing. However, students sometimes approach the exit exam process anticipating that they will need only one draft of their work. In most cases, students will need a full semester of rather focused work in order to prepare the satisfactory papers. Ethically, your committee cannot pass work that has not demonstrated proficiency as a writer, scholar, and practitioner in the field just because the student needs to graduate. The faculty are a supportive and encouraging group of folks who would not hold a successful student back, but we also cannot pass work that has not met graduate level standards.

To successfully complete ENG 596, students must prepare the exit papers to represent their best work to the committee. Students will receive a Pass/Fail grade for the course and must earn a Pass in order to complete the degree requirements. At that time, congratulations will be in order!

If students need more than one semester to complete the exit papers, they will register for ENG 596 only one time, receive a "DE" (deferred) grade for that semester, and once the papers have been completed, the DE is changed to a Pass. At that time, congratulations will be in order!