

# Learn about creating an effective writing assignment for first year college compo...

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Video's description: Learn about creating an effective writing assignment for first-year college composers

Let's take a look at a set of circumstances a first-year writing instructor may face at college 10 one of you CFCs 10 residential colleges. By way of the core courses the colleges facilitate students first encounter with college-level writing instruction as well as an orientation to the college themes as such

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instructors of this course are tasked with teaching two things simultaneously the first-year writing and material addressing the college theme. At college 10 the theme is social justice and Community. College 10th first year's purchase a college ten reader. Although certain unit topics may shift from year to year. The reader always provides the content for the portion of the course devoted to social justice issues. Each unit may contain anywhere from 10 to 15 readings, and instructors are allowed to choose which readings they teach in each unit.

The first reading will consider by Alan Jay Johnson and entitled the social construction of difference. This reading discusses the various ways that difference is constructed in our particular society by drilling down into the definition of privilege and which groups enjoy more and different privileges over others. It is an essay published in a larger anthology entitled readings for diversity and social justice. It's intended for college students studying social justice issues. The race is one of a few variables discussed in the essay that contributes to one or more groups being privileged for others. The reading is entirely text-based.

The second reading is by Jasmine Banks and as entitled black kids don't have to be College battle for their desk to be tragic. This reading delves deeper into particular issues of racial inequality by taking a close-up look at Michael Brown's death and the fact that the media made too much of his being college bound. It's an article published in the route an online magazine of African-American culture. It contains images and links to newscasts and

other online articles. It's intended for really anyone with internet access even if the roots reader base is primarily African-American.

The third reading is by William Julius Wilson and is entitled being poor black in American. This reading takes a thorough look at the political economic and cultural forces that perpetuate the marginalization of African-Americans in u. s. Particularly in urban areas. It's an article published in the spring 2011 volume of American educator; a journal sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers. Its image and statistic rich and is intended for teachers and students of social policy and justice issues.

All three of these readings address racial inequality in the US but do so in unique ways.

The possibilities available in creating assignments with them in a content and braiding focus class are almost problematically vast. So how might an instructor go about designing an effective writing assignment using these three readings as a starting point?

In the next sections of our podcast, we'll take a look at the challenges and instructor's faces and one way they might successfully navigate these pitfalls.

Not only must an instructor focus on the college ten outcomes and required readings but see one outcome for the writing program.

These are as follows:

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With all of these outcomes in mind an instructor must watch out for potential pitfalls when designing assignments.

#### Pitfall #1

##### Thematic content only

In this scenario the assignment focuses solely on the theme of racial inequality, and the instructor forgets to teach writing thereby only enhancing the student's knowledge of the theme so they miss out on the writing outcomes.

#### Pitfall #2

##### Writing and content separation

This assignment treats the readings as less valuable background. This means that the writing assignment doesn't take advantage of the rich ideas in the texts or their value as writing models.

#### Pitfall #3

##### Outcome overload

The assignment asks the students to write heavily about content as well as writing vocabulary in a paper that combines so many tasks that it doesn't leave room for the depth of analysis.

All these things in mind we recommend you design thoughtfully.

There are many possible designs for assignments that effectively balance course themes with the explicit teaching of writing. We would like to offer one example of such an assignment. In this writing task students select two of the readings and compare them in terms of genre and audience.

This task requires that students understand the concept of genre and be able to analyze the features of a text that typify a particular genre. They also need to understand the relationship between genre an audience and how an author's intended audience influences genre choice.

The assignment asks students to start by considering the audience who is the targeted audience of each text? What are the significant characteristics of that audience that would affect the author's choices? For example, a student who chooses the journal article being poor black and American would identify the primary audience as educators concerned with issues of social justice.

They might consider that such an audience would have some background knowledge about the issues and would look for a logical argument supported by evidence. From here the students move to an analysis of the author's use of genres they examine the ways in which each text conforms to the conventions of its genre, and then they discuss connections between the author's choices with respect to genre and the intended audience of the text. Again looking at the journal article students would look at the structure of the argument the systematic presentation of political economic and cultural forces that contribute to poverty. The presentation of statistics and graph form and the language and references that assume prior knowledge.

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We scaffold the assignment by asking students:

This writing assignment strikes an effective balance of attention to theme and focuses on writing.

We hope these suggestions are useful to you as you work to navigate the demands of teaching a theme-based writing course.