Welcome to the graduating class of 2021: The BSU Core Writing Requirement & Placement Essay

During orientation, you will register for your first semester of classes which will include your Core Writing Requirement. In order to fulfill the Core Writing Requirement, most students at BSU take either ENGL 101 or ENGL 101E Writing Rhetorically in their first semester, followed by ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically with Sources in their second semester. Some students place out of ENGL 101 or 101E entirely and move directly into ENGL 102.

You are placed in one of those three courses based on your SAT Verbal scores, High School GPA, and your writing on the placement essay that you will take. That placement essay will be read and evaluated for placement purposes by the writing faculty teaching ENGL 101, 101E, and 102.

Preparing to take the Placement Essay

By writing the strongest essay you can write for the placement essay, you help to insure correct placement in your first year writing class.

To help you to be as prepared as possible to do your best work, we are including a number of documents here:

1. A copy of a previous writing prompt on the value of a liberal arts education.
2. Three sample student placement essays with commentary. The commentary comes from the faculty evaluating the placement exams and indicates why a particular essay received a particular placement.

Advice for writing your placement essay

- Read the sample placement essays with placement explanations prior to reading this year’s prompt.
- Read the prompt carefully, as well as the source material that is included with the prompt question.
- Spend some time planning your response.
- As you plan, consider carefully how you will use the sources given to you as you construct your argument and how you will balance using your personal experience with using information from the sources to prove a thesis or main idea.
- Take the time to revise as necessary, and remember to spell-check and edit your work before submitting it.

This is not a timed test. You can take as long as you need to plan, draft, and revise your essay before you submit it.

* ONCE YOU SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY THROUGH THE ONLINE SYSTEM YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE CHANGES TO YOUR ESSAY. *
The Placement Essay & Academic Integrity

The University has as strict academic integrity policy that all students, including incoming students are expected to abide by. You can read it [here](#). Students who are found to have plagiarized any part of their placement essay will be subject to the policy and brought before the disciplinary board. Additionally, since the placement essay is designed to place you in the course that will help you be a successful student and writer at the university, it is in your best interest that the essay you submit is your own, and only your own, work.

What your readers will look for as they evaluate your essay

The questions surrounding this topic are complex with no right or wrong answers. A satisfactory essay should **BE** of sufficient length to develop a central idea or a thesis in response to the prompt that serves as a main argument for your essay. Ideas in the essay should be organized into logical paragraphs which include specific details that come from the sources included with the prompt. Although there may be some errors, most sentences in the essay should be clearly written. Remember, though, that content is more important than error-free sentences. Though there is no specific word-count requirement for the placement essays, most successful essays are 500 words or more.

We want writers to do the following:

- **Make a central claim** in direct response to the question the prompt asks;
- **Provide supporting reasons and evidence from the sources provided** as well as your own personal experience;
- **Display competence in the organization of your argument**;

Display competence in **sentence variety, paragraph development, and language usage**.
Writing Proficiency Essay 2015
Bridgewater State University

What You Should Know about the Writing Proficiency Essay
The English professors who will read your essay want you to do as well as you possibly can, and, therefore, want to provide you with information about what we will look for in a successful essay.

A satisfactory essay should develop a central idea in response to the prompt that serves as a main argument for your essay. Ideas in the essay should be organized into logical paragraphs which include specific details that come from the reading included with the prompt. Although there may be some errors, most sentences in the essay should be clearly written. Remember, though, that content is more important than error-free sentences or perfect handwriting. Don’t waste time copying your essay over. You may, however, want to write only on every other line, leaving room for some revision.

You will have an hour to complete your essay. After you’ve read the prompt carefully, spend 5-10 minutes planning your response. You may want to make a quick outline on the inside cover of your blue book. Save time to read over your writing before handing your essay in.

What your readers will look for as they evaluate your essay:
The questions surrounding this topic are complex with no right or wrong answers. We want writers to do the following:

- Make a central claim about the topic;
- Provide supporting reasons and evidence from the sources provided for all claims;
- Recognize the complexities of this topic, addressing more than one of them;
- Display competence in logical development and organization;
- Display competence in sentence variety, paragraph development, and usage.
As an incoming student to Bridgewater State University, you, like most college students across the country, will be required to take a number of introductory courses in a wide range of academic fields in addition to the classes you will take in your major; you might take courses in English or Mathematics, Biology or Art, History, Sociology, Anthropology, or Political Science, just to name a few. These courses make up what is called a liberal arts education. In a college career that requires 120 credit hours to graduate, roughly 1/3 or 45 credit hours of your education will be in the liberal arts. Currently, there is national debate on the value of a liberal arts education. We are asking you to weigh in on that debate. **Make an argument about the contribution or value of a liberal arts education as part of your overall college education and qualifications for a future career.**

To help you form an opinion and develop an argument, read the following statements from educators and policy-makers. You should use this material as evidence to prove your argument as you write.

- “A degree does not guarantee . . . a good job anymore. . . . Yet old-guard academic leaders are still clinging to the status quo -- and loudly insisting that a four-year liberal arts degree is a worthy investment in every young American's future. We keep telling young Americans that a bachelor's degree in history is as valuable as, say, a chemical engineering degree -- but it's just not true anymore. All degrees are not created equal. And if we . . . maintain this narrow-minded approach, then we are not just failing young indebted Americans and their families. We are harming the long-term vitality of our economy.”
  

- “Unfortunately, demands for a more efficient, practical college education are likely to lead to the opposite: men and women who are trained for yesterday's problems and yesterday's jobs, men and women who have not reflected on their own lives in ways that allow them to tap into their capacities for innovation and for making meaning out of their experience. Under the guise of "practicality" we are really hearing calls for conformity, calls for conventional thinking that will impoverish our economic, cultural and personal lives.”
  
  **From Michael S. Roth, PhD, Professor of History and the Humanities and President of Wesleyan University, “Declaring Our Independence Through Education” HuffPost College 7.03.2014**

- “Employers recognize capacities that cut across majors as critical to a candidate’s potential for career success, and they view these skills as more important than a student’s choice of undergraduate major. Nearly all those surveyed (93%) agree, ‘a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than a students undergraduate major’.”
  
  **From It Takes More Than A Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success, a survey of US Employers conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU), 2013**
- “Talent can come in so many different forms and be built in so many nontraditional ways today, hiring officers have to be alive to every one — besides brand-name colleges. Because [according to Lazlo Block, CEO of Google] “when you look at people who don’t go to school and make their way in the world, those are exceptional human beings. And we should do everything we can to find those people.” Too many colleges, he added, “don’t deliver on what they promise. You generate a ton of debt, you don’t learn the most useful things for your life. It’s [just] an extended adolescence.”


- The ways of thinking and communicating that literature, history, philosophy, and science teach us make us better able to understand and to change the world around us. As [Matthew Arnold] put it, they give us "increased sympathy" and an ability to act out of disinterestedness (a lack of self-interest) instead of "doing as one likes." It’s a good prescription for trying to make sense of the complexities of the Middle East or climate change or Ebola, or any of the challenges we . . . are likely to face in our lifetimes.

From From Paula Krebs, PhD, Dean of the School of Humanities at Bridgewater State University “Ferguson and the Liberal Arts” Vitae 12.02.2014

### The Value of Higher Education

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate in 2013 (%)</th>
<th>Median lifetime earnings in 2013 ($ in millions)</th>
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<td>Professional Degree</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.0</td>
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All workers: 5.4% All workers: $2.2 MILLION

Sample Placement Essay: Placement Directly into ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically With Sources
Word Count: 740

The concept of a liberal arts education goes beyond just earning a college degree. The skills and concepts provided by the liberal arts give today’s students the ability to think outside the box—as in think critically about the problem at hand, open the minds of themselves and others, and surpass inapplicable test-taking and general studies by acquiring the experience to change not just their level of education, but more importantly the world around them. Of course it is naïve to assume that every member of this generation of college students could choose to get a degree in a more liberal arts based study, such as anthropology or creative writing, and somehow all get a job right out of college. They would be competing with engineers, doctors, and lawyers for that top spot in society, just to name a few. But that is a common misconception about the liberal arts field. It is not about what one chooses to get their degree in. It’s about the path you take to get it. The liberal arts path provides a much more rounded, experienced based, student-focused education than almost any other method of college level practices.

There are many people that believe liberal arts based institutions are an over-rated waste of time. Scott Gerber, founder of the Young Entrepreneur Council gives the example that “we keep telling young Americans that a bachelor’s degree in history is as valuable as, say, a chemical engineering degree—but it’s just not true anymore. All degrees are not created equal.” Gerber is certainly not wrong in saying this, but his mindset regarding the issue is off. He is focusing too much on the degree itself and not what the student has learned through attaining it. He implies that the student with the chemical engineering degree does not have a liberal arts background, but that does not have to be the case. There are plenty of liberal arts based schools who offer a variety of engineering programs as a major. They have no doubt gotten more real world experience, practiced more in-depth analysis, and come more prepared to make a difference in the world because they understand it first hand as opposed to through book work or testing. The degree being acquired is not what is important—anyone can get any degree while also having a liberal arts background.

The idea that college students today need to major in the most difficult major possible in order to be successful is backwards as well. It’s not always even about the degree—it’s about what you can do, how you can collaborate with other people, and what you can bring to the table to provide innovation. A recent survey of US employers from 2013 concluded that “employers recognize capacities that cut across majors as critical to a candidates potential for career success, and they view these skills as more important than a student’s choice of undergraduate major.” That is basically saying that employers look at the resumes of college graduates and say, okay, you got the degree, but what can you do with it? It’s obvious that you knew the answers to all the test questions and passed your classes, but can you apply it to the real world? Can you do it with other people? These are important questions. The only way to achieve that level of professional success is to have that liberal arts background. Anyone has the ability to get a degree, but those who are successful with it are ones who can apply it to real life and use creative liberal skills to make a difference.

The world is not made up of answer sheets and math problems—it’s made of complex problems of emotion, critical thinking, relationships, things we can’t even understand yet. Bridgewater State University’s own Paula Krebs comments on all of the complex issues we are likely to face in our lifetimes, and describes liberal arts to be a “good prescription” for trying to make sense of them. This couldn’t be more accurate. The main difference between a liberal arts education and its lesser counterparts is that the liberal arts incorporates the real world-skills outside of just your degree. It’s a focus on the experience of getting that degree. Life is an experience—it’s not a test we need to pass. The only way to be truly successful in the professional world is to build a foundation of a liberal arts education.
Why is this an ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically With Sources Placement?

- It makes a central claim that responds directly to the question the prompt asked the writer to comment on.

- Furthermore, the claim—that professional life is not a series of tests but demands critical thinking and people skills that only the liberal arts can provide—is a pretty complex one.

- The essay develops this claim by developing supporting ideas in a logical fashion in paragraphs. The writer argues that the liberal arts teaches skills that are required regardless of major; these skills teach people how to function in the real and professional world.

- The essay identifies arguments that contradict the main claim of the writer (that the liberal arts are not as valuable as other areas of study) and explains why the writer’s position is stronger.

- **The essay uses the sources provided with the prompt to prove the claim.** This is the distinguishing feature between an essay that places a student in ENGL 101 or 101E and an essay that places a student in ENGL 102 directly: the ability to use the sources provided correctly and in support of a central claim. Notice how the writer doesn’t just include the quote but engages with the quote, explaining what it means and how it proves her point.

- The writing is by and large clear, with very few errors that interfere with understanding; the language and sentence structure shows style and voice.
Sample Placement Essay: Placement into ENGL 101 Writing Rhetorically
Word Count: 552

Today we live in a fast paced and quickly changing world. Automobiles were invented in the last century, along with airplanes and space shuttles. Today, almost everybody carries around a computer, that will always be smarter than them, in their pocket. So in this world of technology, why bother learning about the liberal arts? The liberal arts are essential to everyone’s education because they teach us how to read and write effectively, about our history, and because liberal arts are the foundation of every education.

Without the liberal arts, there wouldn’t be teachers to teach students how to read and write. Maybe that is only on a low level, but think, where would you be today if you were never taught the alphabet. You most likely wouldn’t be a college professor, and you certainly wouldn’t be reading this essay. We, as Americans, take literacy for granted because most of us were fortunate enough to have a free preliminary education. The liberal arts are furthered in middle school by learning twenty new vocabulary words a week, then, finally you write your first essay for placement into your high school English course. For the next four years, essay after essay is handed in, each time combing back with a little less red ink on it. You are done with high school. You officially know how to read and write effectively and you have your diploma to prove that. So why pay a very lot of money just so it can be taught to you again in college?

You should gladly learn your liberal arts because furthering them can only expand your comprehension. Reading and writing will always be a part of every job and essays will have to be written even by math, or science majors. Literacy is important!

So far, this essay has primarily focused on reading and writing, but the liberal arts are much more than that. The history of our country, and of the world is sought out by liberal arts majors who then teach it to the young minds back in grammar school. What about the math and science majors who “generate a ton of debt” (Thomas C. Friedman)? Well they are always bragging about how much money they will make someday so they can pay it off later. On a serious note, many alumni graduate with mountains of debt and it’s easy to see how frustrating it could be, having to pay money for a course that doesn’t pertain to your major. The liberal arts are still important, and very much worth it. Rules are about to be broken. I, yes, I once wanted to be an engineer. It was projected to have fantastic job placement and all of my friends wanted to be one too. As time went on and math got harder, I started to fall behind as my friends moved forward. Math is very challenging for me, and my childhood dream of being an engineer was slowly dying. I discovered psychology and found a new dream.

The technology of today isn’t meant to be invented or built by everybody, and like I don’t understand math very well, a math major may not understand the liberal arts very well. That’s why it is important for everybody to be educated in the liberal arts at the college level.
Why is this an ENGL 101 Writing Rhetorically Placement?

- **It makes a central claim** that responds directly to the question the prompt asked the writer to comment on. This is probably the most important thing to keep in mind: placement in ENGL 101 requires that a writer understand what a central claim is.

- However, the essay only partially develops the claim from the first paragraph. Most of the essay is about the literacy. The last part of the claim is not really addressed.

- As the essay builds, it alludes to arguments, but does not make statements that tell us what those arguments are.

- **The essay does not use any of the sources included in the prompt to support the central claim.** This is the biggest difference between an ENGL 101 and an ENGL 102 placement. ENGL 102 placement requires that the writer demonstrate the ability to use sources to support a central claim.

- The writing is by and large clear, with few errors that interfere with understanding.
Sample Placement Essay: Placement into ENGL 101E Enhanced Writing Rhetorically
Word Count: 305

A liberal arts education gives you the knowledge you need in the future, it’s valuable. People all around the world compete in jobs to see who is superior over one another. Without a liberal arts degree you won’t be able to compete, if you want something in life you have to go get it. Liberal arts is one step closer to getting what you want in life for example a career. Talent can come in different ways but not everyone is talented enough to make it in life and be successful. That’s where hard work comes in there is a saying “Talent can beat hard work if Talent decides to work hard too.” For example in high school if you are talented enough to play on a varsity sport but you don’t work hard then you will never play, but if you are talented and you work hard not only will you play but you will definitely start. In life not everything is handed to you like a liberal arts degree is not handed to you, you have to earn it, not only a liberal arts education is useful but in the future it can make you successful. Without a college degree you won’t be able to explore new things you won’t be able to find what you like and what you don’t like. For example if you start off in college loving philosophy then in your junior year you find boring and uninteresting you can change it. Instead of not going to college and getting a philosophy related job and ending up hating your career for the rest of your life. I agree on what Scott Gerber said “A degree does not guarantee a good job” but I think a bachelor’s degree is one step closer to being successful and having a career that you dream of having.

Why is this an ENGL 101E Enhanced Writing Rhetorically Placement?

• It is difficult to tell what central claim this essay is making about the liberal arts. This is the biggest difference between an essay that is placed in ENGL 101 and an essay that is placed in ENGL 101E.

• The essay includes several statements that seem unrelated to the topic of the liberal arts and the discussion about the liberal arts does not give supporting evidence to any central claim about the value of the liberal arts.

• The essay does not address an opposing viewpoint.

• The essay does not use any of the sources included in the prompt to support the central claim. The essay does include a source, but does not explain it or use it to support any claim about the value of the liberal arts (the quote is actually about the relationship between a college degree and getting a job).

• The writing has errors that interfere with understanding and do not reflect the rules of standardized written English.
Course Descriptions & Learning Outcomes:

ENGL 101/ENGL 101E Writing Rhetorically and ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically with Sources

ENGL 101/101E* - Writing Rhetorically
(3 credits)
Prerequisite: First-Year Writing Placement Exam or consent of Academic Achievement Center

By intensive practice in composing persuasive texts, writers explore various techniques for discovering, developing and organizing ideas in relation to rhetorical context. Special attention is given to developing an effective writing process and an awareness of the relationships among text, audience and purpose. Meets the Core Writing Requirement.

*Corequisite: Students enrolled in ENGL 101E must also enroll in the corequisite course ENGL 144.

ENGL 144 - Academic Strategies Colloquium
(1 credit)
Prerequisite: First-Year Writing Placement Exam or consent of Academic Achievement Center
Corequisite: ENGL 101E

Under faculty supervision, students acquire strategies such as reading texts, developing thesis into argument and integrating opinion into argument, which will enhance their success in the corequisite course. Successful completion of ENGL 144 requires successful completion of the corequisite ENGL101E.

ENGL 102 - Writing Rhetorically with Sources
(3 credits)
Prerequisite: ENGL 101 or placement test
Continuing to develop knowledge of persuasive writing and rhetoric, the writer learns and practices various approaches to conducting research and to integrating the ideas of others into one’s own text. Emphasis is on writing longer and more substantive texts that incorporate a variety of sources. Meets the Core Writing Requirement.
English Department Course Outcomes

English 101/English 101E: Writing Rhetorically
In this course, students will
- Develop rhetorical awareness by understanding how to analyze the purpose and audience for specific writing situations and use this analysis to guide their writing and reading.
- Formulate a focused, arguable thesis and support this thesis in an effectively organized essay with evidence drawn from class readings, class discussions, and their knowledge and experience.
- Approach writing as a recursive process which involves inventing, composing, revising and editing.
- Compose in a voice appropriate for the genre, goals, and target audience.
- Critically read and respond to a variety of texts, including published texts, their peers’ texts, and their own texts.
- Use technology to write, revise, and deliver documents.
- Demonstrate facility in using the conventions of Standard Written English, including the conventions of sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

English 102: Writing Rhetorically with Sources
In this course, students will
- Continue to grow as a writer and reader in relation to the ENGL 101 outcomes.
- Become familiar with conducting research through the use of electronic academic research tools, such as Maxwell Library’s online catalogue and electronic research databases.
- Locate both primary and secondary source materials and evaluate their credibility.
- Approach research as a recursive process, consisting of a series of tentative hypotheses that are then tested and affirmed or revised.
- Effectively integrate secondary sources into their own texts, using an appropriate citation style, while demonstrating a clear awareness of the relationship of these sources to the writer’s central point and a clear distinction between the ideas and language of the writer and those of the sources.