

Creating clear assignments, communicating accurate values: A workshop for instructors in all disciplines

In this workshop we'll examine principles for writing clear instructions to our students that define the kind of written texts we want to receive. We will then devise scoring guides that express the aspects of these assignments that we value—the criteria we use to grade the assignments. We'll work from a sample document drawn from an actual course, but participants are encouraged to bring an assignment of their own to revise during the workshop.

The pages that follow are the handouts that we'll structure the workshop around.

Assignment prompt guidelines¹

Title of your assignment	Cue the genre of the document you want to read
Task	<p>What is the intellectual problem that the student needs to work out? Choose your verbs carefully because they can suggest the kind of document you expect to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast • Describe • Explore • Critically reflect • Summarize
Goal/purpose	<p>What is the goal or purpose of the document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To persuade the reader to adopt a different position • To inform about a topic • To analyze the various attitudes towards a subject • To reflect on an experience in light of research on that subject? • To describe a sequence of events in detail
Audience	<p>If the audience is the instructor, characterize the instructor’s interests in the topic, the background of the instructor, the instructor’s initial position on the topic/subject. Explain what “scholarly” means and convey the values of the discipline—for citations, for evidence, for genre.</p> <p>If the audience is not the instructor, detail who that non-scholarly audience is and how the text students will create needs to be constructed to work for that audience.</p>
Genre	<p>Describe the work that the document needs to do to be successful. What questions should the document answer? What typical features mark this genre?</p>
Process	<p>How should a student go about getting started on this assignment? Are there steps that you recommend they take? Will there be opportunities for feedback before the assignment is graded?</p>
Format	<p>Describe, in detail, how you want the paper to look when it is handed in to you.</p>
Evaluation/grading	<p>Identify the criteria you will use to evaluate the assignment. Attach a separate sheet or scoring guide/rubric.</p>

¹ See John Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011. Pp. 99-100.

Assignment prompt worksheet²

Title of your assignment	
Task	
Goal/purpose	
Audience	
Genre	
Process	
Format	
Evaluation/grading	

² See John Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011. Pp. 99-100.

Sample assignment

Title of your assignment	Scholarly Paper
Task	We learn about nursing/nurses from a variety of sources: popular culture (advertisements, television, movies etc.), experiences, professional associations and the scholarly literature. As nurses, it is important that we are able to bring an <u>informed and critical view</u> to these images and ideas.
Goal/purpose	<p>The purpose of this assignment is to critically reflect on the ways that nursing is portrayed in a variety of nursing and non-nursing sources, and to begin to consider how this may affect nursing practice.</p> <p>Reflect What are some of the key arguments or points in these different sources of information?</p> <p>Synthesis What do these sources tell us about nursing? Write a <u>reflective scholarly essay</u>* that responds to the following questions: In what ways does the popular media portrayal of the nurse differ from what is found in professional nursing literature or in scholarly writing about nursing? What are the possible reasons for these similarities and differences? What are some of the values, beliefs and/or assumptions that inform different images of nursing in Canada? How do you think the portrayal of a nurse in popular media might impact the public opinion toward the nursing profession? What might be some implications for nursing as a profession?</p>
Audience	Instructor
Genre	* A scholarly essay is an essay that explores ideas drawing on credible sources to support and extend your own ideas.
Process	<p>To prepare for this assignment, you will be provided with a list of selected readings from nursing journals and other professional literature on this topic. References for the readings will be posted on the NURS 1xx eClass site under the 'Assignments' module.</p> <p>In addition to the selected readings, you will locate at least 1 other source of professional nursing literature that discusses the image and role of the nurse. Examples include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. professional college (CARNA) b. national association (CNA) c. peer reviewed nursing journals <p>You will also read chapter 3 in your Potter and Perry nursing fundamentals textbook to learn more about the history of nursing in Canada:</p>

	<p>Ross-Kerr, J. (2010). The development of nursing in Canada. In P. A. Potter, A. Perry, J. Ross-Kerr, & M. J. Wood (Eds). <i>Canadian fundamentals of nursing (revised 4th edition</i> pp. 28-30).Toronto: Elsevier.</p> <p>Observations of popular culture What are your observations about how nursing is portrayed in other places, for example on television or in movies or books? (<u>Briefly</u> write up some notes describing your observations i.e. the source of information and how it portrays the role and image of nurses – you will draw on these to write your paper.) Some questions you might reflect on: What do you think the image of the nurse portrays about his or her treatment of patients? How is the nurse’s relationship with other health care providers and disciplines portrayed? Do you think that professional values are conveyed? How do you think the overall image of this nurse might impact the public opinion toward the nursing profession?</p>
Format	<p>Length of paper: 5 typewritten pages of text (12-point font, Times New Roman, double spaced) from introduction to end of conclusion ($\pm 10\%$), not including title page and reference page(s) Paragraph format, no point form accepted Headings are to be used within the body of the paper (e.g., use Level 1 or Levels 1 and 2 as per APA guidelines) APA style must be used for all aspects of the paper. Paper Outline: The paper should include the following content and sections: Cover Page (see sample provided on eClass) Note: Please use your U of A ID number, not your name. Introduction Background related to the topic Statement of aim/purpose of paper and how paper will unfold Body of Paper Could include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the image and role of the nurse in popular media (and other non-nursing sources) and the ways this differs from or is similar to the image and role of the nurse as found in professional publications. Conclusion Summary of key points from paper Reference Page(s) – APA format Due Date: October 3, 2011 Submit paper (hard copy) to your tutor at the beginning of class. Electronic versions will be submitted to the assignment drop-box by 0800 on October 3, 2011 Note: 10% mark reduction per calendar day will be applied unless prior approval for late submission has been granted by your seminar tutor.</p>
Evaluation/grading	<p>Assignments will be marked according to the Guidelines for Evaluation of Scholarly Papers found on page 12 of the NURS 1xx course outline.</p>