

Proposal for "W" Course Approval

If you have questions about filling out this form, consult the Chair of the W Course Advisory Committee (Dr. [Valerie Balester](#), 845-1420), the [description of W courses](#) on the University Writing Center web site, or the [Checklist of "W" Course Requirements](#).

Name of Proposer: Leon W. Couch III
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College: Liberal Arts & Sciences
Department: Performance Studies
Course Title & Number: MUSC 206

Number of Sections per Academic year: 1
Enrollment per Section (Avg) : 10
Are you Faculty? Yes
(NOTE: Graduate assistants, including GATs, are not considered faculty)
First W course taught? Yes
Is the course appropriate for majors in your department? Yes
Number of credits: 2

Approximate number of words for ALL graded assignments: Less than 1000 2000 – 4000
1000 – 2000 **Approx. 5200 words**
Percentage of grade based on demonstrated writing skill: **Approx 37% of homework grade;
Approx. 20% of total grade**
(see justification for exception to the 30% rule below)
Percentage of course devoted to writing instruction: 10 homework essays, 1 extended essay test; a few days of classroom instruction but most learning is through written feedback (see details below under "feedback provided")
Do students receive feedback on the major writing assignments? Students may redo homework assignments as many times as they wish, revising with instructor's comments

Describe feedback provided:

Ten of the 27 daily assignments involve essay writing, from one to three typed pages in solid academic prose. Students develop their ability to express their thoughts about music, develop a thesis statement, and provide support. Persuasive discourse, mastery of technical vocabulary in our discipline, succinctness, and organization are emphasized. Students are required to resubmit an assignment as many times as necessary in order to earn a "C" or higher on the assignment. Most students resubmit each essay between two and four times, but, an excellent writer might have one submission, while a very dedicated student might have as many as eight submissions on an essay---using the instructor's feedback, they often resubmit until they've developed an excellent essay ("A") or at least a good one ("B"). In other words, they spend a lot of time in the revision stage, polishing their writing into high-quality products beyond what they may have originally imagined; this seems to be a new experience for many of them. Because the class size is very small, students receive a tremendous amount of personalized comments on their argument, support, and prose style. In fact, they get more detailed feedback and write more prose than in most required English courses.

Elaborate on the methods of instruction used, for example, lecture, modeling, discussion, in-class writing, peer response groups. Instruction also includes providing feedback other than the final grade and opportunities for students to practice writing. For more information about possible teaching methods, see the [Pedagogy](http://uwc.tamu.edu/faculty/pedagogy/index.html) section of the University Writing Center web site (<http://uwc.tamu.edu/faculty/pedagogy/index.html>).

The first assignments involve modeling. I read sample students essays (good, ok, and bad) from previous years in order to teach jargon, conventions in my discipline, scholarly prose styles, persuasive discourse, and so forth. At first, I even provide them with thesis statements, good support, and so forth, so that they can concentrate on the prose style, transitions, and elegance. In a series of ten homework essay assignments, I slowly remove this crutch, as their musical-analytical skills and their experience with writing persuasively about music increases. By the end, they must do the musical analysis, interpretation of musical-analytical observations (formulating an opinion and significant thesis), and writing prose entirely on their own. At the end of the semester, they must reflect upon what they learned through this series of writing assignments by submitting a "writing portfolio" and writing an essay on it. Incidentally, students occasionally get the opportunity to read and comment upon their classmates' work.

This course is currently a two-credit course that at most schools is four credits divided into two separate courses. Next fall (2005), this course will likewise be split into a two-credit course (music theory) and a one-credit course (musicianship). At that point, I can finally require a brief term paper (5-10 pages) at the end. This term paper assignment would follow the sequence of assignments already described and rely heavily on the skills gained through them.

Who will evaluate graded writing? Include all assistants and designate if they are graduate or undergraduate. You do not need to use specific names, i.e., you can specify "7 undergraduate majors not taking course," or "3 Graduate Assistants." (*No more than 10% of the final course grade can be determined by undergraduate assistants. This does not include the use of [Calibrated Peer Review](#) software.*)

All of the essays are graded by the professor.

If you are working with assistants (graduate or undergraduate included), briefly explain how you will monitor and supervise their work and what roles they will play in the teaching of writing:

There is an undergraduate student grader, but he/she only does more objective grading, leaving all essay grading to me.

If you have any further comments you think the committee should consider about your course, include them here:

This course has the duty of teaching advanced undergraduate music theory, but I feel that writing about music and developing thinking skills through writing is vital to their long-term success. Writing is not addressed in any of our other majors courses. So, I have instituted a very large writing component that is unusual for music-theory courses. Because of the difficulty of the material in this course, nearly no students would be able to pass without doing "C" or higher level work on essays. Theoretically it is possible to pass without accomplishing "C" level work, I've never seen it. Because of the first priority of teaching musical-analysis and music-theory skills required of majors throughout the country, I cannot explicitly assign 30% of the grade to just writing, despite the emphasis upon it and practical requirement of them to pass the essay assignments. Nevertheless, I think the students really do make amazing progress and deserve the "W" for their efforts.

Submit electronically to: Dr. Valerie Balester, W Course Advisory Committee (v-balester@tamu.edu), along with an electronic copy of your syllabus.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRING FORMAL PROSE WRITING IN MUSC 206:

Assign #1 – Essay on “Herr” analysis 300-500 words
Assign #2 – Essay on “Gott” analysis 300-500 words
Assign #6 – Essay on Mozart analysis 500-700 words
Assign #9 – Essay on Brahms analysis 500-700 words
Assign #12 – Essay on Schubert analysis 500-700 words
Assign #19 – Essay on Chopin EM analysis 500-700 words
Assign #21 – Essay on Chopin em analysis 500-700 words
Assign #22 – Essay on Debussy analysis 500-1000 words
Assign #26 – Essay on Webern analysis 300-500 words
Assign #27 – Essay on their writing portfolio 500-1000 words

TESTS REQUIRING FORMAL PROSE WRITING IN MUSC 206:

Test III – Long essay (5 hr limit) on Brahms analysis 500-1000 words

WORDS OF FORMAL PROSE WRITTEN IN MUSC 206:

Minimum # of words in semester = 5200

PERCENTAGE OF GRADE:

Percentage of homework grade: 10 of 27 assignments = 37%

Homework grade constitutes 35% of total grade

Percentage of test grades: ½ of Test III

Tests constitute 30% of grade

Thus, essays constitute approximately 20% of the overall grade in the course.