# 'WRITE TO LEARN' ACTIVITIES - HUMANITIES

## ❖ IN-CLASS WRITING (Five Common Activities)

Type of Activity	Objective	When to use it	Examples
(1) Free Writes	To activate prior knowledge or generate ideas by free association.	<ul> <li>works as a good warm-up at the beginning of class</li> <li>instructors can pose an opening/introduction question related to the day's topic</li> </ul>	"What do you know about X?"  "What types of images or symbols can you think of which can be used as literary devices? Take 3 minutes to write out your ideas. Then read and share your ideas with a partner."
	Students write about a predetermined topic for a brief, specified number of minutes (1-5 minutes) as fast as they can and put words on paper.	can be used to wrap up the day's topic or lecture or to help connect ideas	"What did you learn today about X?" "What questions are left unanswered in regards to X?"  "Summarize concept X or concepts XYZ that we've been discussing in class today."  "What part of this concept/these concepts confuse(s) you?"  "Explain what we learned today in your own words."  "What is the relationship between last day's topic and today's?"
		<ul> <li>can be used to supplement reading content</li> <li>can be used to moderate discussion activities</li> <li>instructors can also use exam review questions</li> </ul>	"What questions do you have about the last reading?"  "What were the most important points in the last reading?"  s as free writes to help students prepare for a test.
(2) Paragraph Writing	Students write, read and share their paragraphs.	<ul> <li>Can be used to:</li> <li>Define a concept you've presented</li> <li>Apply a principle to the students' experience</li> <li>Make connections with previous learning</li> <li>Summarize or synthesize important points from a lecture or assigned reading</li> <li>Translate a principle into a word problem</li> </ul>	Sample Paragraph Writing Prompt Based on Assigned Reading:  A. Read or skim the Dilworth (2010) article.  B. In a free writing paragraph, answer:  "According to Dilworth (2010), what kinds of religious symbols or images are used to employ meaning in F.Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby? Take 5 minutes to write your paragraph. Then read and share your paragraph with your group."
(3) One-Sentence Summaries	Have students write one-sentence summaries of a lecture, reading assignment, or discussion.		Sample Topic:  "Using the same text source for our last activity on "Paragraph Writing," write a 1- sentence summary of the reading assignment. Then share your ideas with someone from another discipline (outside of your area of Social Sciences, Humanities, or Science)."
(4) Writing Questions	Have students write 2 or 3 questions concerning the main ideas or concepts in a reading		Topic Prompt:  "Using the same text source as above, jot down 2 or 3 questions you have concerning the main ideas or concepts in the reading. Then share your ideas with another new person from another discipline (outside of your area of Social Sciences, Humanities, or Science)."
(5) The One- Minute Paper	Students summarize the most important or most useful point(s) from the lecture, reading assignment, or discussion; Students can write questions that remain as well.		Sample One-Minute Writing Prompt from Today's Presentation: "What are the basic ideas behind the concept "Writing Across the Curriculum" (WAC) that we learned today?"

#### OTHER IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITIES **Group Paragraph Writing: Rotating Response** Student groups join to write a collaborative **Stations: Class Minutes:** response to a topic. This helps to Have 1 or 2 students be notetakers introduce a physical **Writing Assignment** element or for the day who will be responsible **Idea Generation:** dynamism for a for summarizing the class Use class time for **Buzz Groups:** specific topic or presentation, lecture, or activities in students to brainstorm concept. the first 5 minutes of the next class. Students work as a group to write down & generate ideas for a issues or specific topics or concepts from a writing assignment. reading. To diversify, students can write on note paper, poster board, etc. Note-taking **Anonymous Question Box:** Make a question box for students Group Other to place things they would find Work **Snowballing:** useful to review before an exam. This could also be done by This involves expanding groups. Students anonymous submissions of sheets prepare a question or response alone. Then of paper in class or online. they join a partner, pair, etc. to compare and discuss. Exam Mock Test Creation: Other In-Class Use class time for students **Visual Representation: Activities** to brainstorm & review Visual Instructors can lead brainstorming of ideas before exams. main themes through visual representation or drawing. Example: "Take a minute to draw "First Day" Writing Activities: some pictures of the first few things **Short Answer Writing:** that come to mind when you think of Some Ideas for short writing promps: Χ." The instructor poses a 1) Give students a general question to question. Students write Sample topics: The Renaissance, the introduce them to the general material & share answers with Enlightenment, etc. on the first day. Writing partners or the class. 2) Ask them to write a short response to submit to you; you can return it to the students at the end-of term as a reflective exercise. **Alternative Views:** 3) Toss out a "playground" question for In-Class Stop & Write: them to answer in groups, or for you to Have students write alternative points of This can be used when you feel students put answers on the board. Ease them view to a different topic relative to your may need a moment to focus attention, into contributing with a friendly course. assimilate information or articulate a assignment. Philosophy Example: "How do Plato and question. It can help to refocus a class 4) Have students jot down any fears or Aristotle differ in their views towards the discussion or attention (including yours! anxieties they have as they enter your social relations of the family?" ☺). course.

#### **OUT-OF-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITIES Response Papers:** Students can respond to particular features of a Free Writes as Homework: reading or the effectiveness of logical argument; Journals: evidence provided. Students can write about what This can include logs based on they read & what they don't reading (combined with SQRRRW understand; this can include Survey, Question, Read, Recite, **Abstract Paragraph Summaries of Readings:** notes & reflection; Instructors Review, Write skills/SPAR skills), Students can practice writing abstract-style can change prompts. writing logs, lecture logs, or paragraphs for chapters or readings as a summary thinking logs; journals can be of the main points. ongoing; prompts can remain constant or vary. **Short Synthesis Papers: Class Discussion** Based on Students can work through **Questions:** commonalities across several \*Debate Note Readings readings in their writing. **Preparation** Have students generate questions for discussion activities. **Exploratory Writing Assignments:** Ask students to compare two concepts from a **Famous Person or Historical** reading, connect a concept from the reading **Question Period:** Other to some experience in their lives, or work out a definition in writing. Students can generate a list of Out-of-Class guestions they would pose to the **Activities** author of a reading or a famous **Annotation Paragraph of Readings:** figure in the field. Students can practice writing annotation paragraphs that include key ideas, strengths, & weaknesses geared toward a particular class project or **Collaborative Team** assignment. Based on **Reports or Writing:** Course Students join together for collaborative writing. Concepts Assignments/Pi \*\*Writer's Log Submissions esentations **Compact Essays:** Have students write a 2 or 3 page **Paper Presentations:** essay on a key course concept or topic. It's good to assign different Writing Assignments for a Students bring condensed 1-**Record Challenges:** groups different topics. Then they **Prescribed Role or Case Study:** page versions of assignment have to condense their own essay to 1 papers & present to groups or Students can jot Ex. Letter to the editor; policy report, page & share it with classmates. The the whole class. down notes letter writing, etc. other students read & comment on it. concerning where Example: "Write a convincing letter to X Finally, they can write a group paper they are stuck or stating your reasons for or against X" that combines the best of their ideas confused about (Sample Topic - Religious worship in in 1 page. certain points. schools in Toronto).

#### \*Debate Note Preparation

Have students prepare written notes for debate format.

#### Roles:

- First Affirmative defines main terms & outlines the affirmative case
- First Negative contests any badly defined terms & outlines the negative case
- Second Affirmative and Second Negative complete the case, especially with evidence.
- Rebuttals show weaknesses in the most important arguments of the opposing case
- Question period

Have student observers of the debate follow up in written form and make a judgment in written form with reasons & evidence.

#### \*\*Writer's Log Submissions

Have students submit a writer's log for submission of assignment drafts. Ask the students about their main point, how the writing went, which parts seem strong, weak, what questions they have for their readers, etc. This works like a reflection when students submit a draft assignment.

## ONLINE WRITE-TO-LEARN OPTIONS

Many of the activities can be tailored to online formats:

# E-journals, course websites, or email

 Students can respond to certain topics or prompts in these forums and instructors can highlight interesting or relevant posts.

### Discussion boards

 Students can post provocative questions, queries, or summary/analysis of labs or lectures on an electronic bulletin board or Web forum for class comment.

### Puzzlemaker

- This is a fun tool for students or instructors to create crosswords, word searches, etc. for key concepts and ideas.
- Link:
   http://www.discoveryeducation.
   com/free puzzlemaker/?CFID=3208214&CF
   TOKEN=18370909