

**DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT**

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# Choosing the First Year Writing Course that Fits You



**CSU CHANNEL ISLANDS FIRST YEAR  
COMPOSITION PROGRAM**

# WHAT IS DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT?

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At most California State University campuses, the English Placement Test (EPT) is used to determine which first year writing course a student will take.

Here at CSU Channel Islands, the composition faculty believe that students can make a much more well-informed decision than any placement test.

We call our program “Directed Self-Placement” because, with a little direction from us, you will place yourself in composition.

This following pages provide information and suggestions to help you choose the course that fits you.



***At CI, students fulfill the first year writing requirement by completing one of two options:***

- 1. Stretch Composition (ENGL 102-103)*
- 2. Composition & Rhetoric I (ENGL 105)*

***Each option is discussed below.***

## ***Option 1: The Stretch Sequence***

Most students begin with the two-course composition sequence, which gives students a full year to develop the communication skills required in the final portfolio.

### **ENGL 102: Stretch Composition I (3 units)**

The fall semester course focuses on helping students develop strategies for using writing as a tool for thinking and learning. Students learn that writing involves a number of thinking and writing strategies, including invention, prewriting, drafting, peer review, revising, and editing. Classes typically begin with narrative/reflective writing assignments and progress to limited kinds of research.

### **ENGL 103: Stretch Composition II (3 units)**

During spring semester, students focus on integrating research into their writing to support their claims. Typical assignments include argumentation as well as collaborative research and writing.

To complete ENGL 103 and fulfill the General Education requirement for first year writing (A2), students must pass the final portfolio.

## **Why take Stretch 102-103?**

- Relaxed pace while fulfilling requirement
- Easier transition to college writing
- Emphasis on developing writing strategies
- Less demanding assignments at first
- More time to complete assignments
- More opportunities to revise papers
- Same instructor and classmates for both semesters
- Supportive environment in which to *stretch* your development across two semesters
- Earn 6 college credits (3 units for 102 in fall, 3 units for 103 in spring)

***“Stretch composition 102-103 was a great choice because you can learn at your own speed. You have the time to really focus on developing your writing style rather than just busting out a bunch of papers in a semester and praying for a good grade.”***

*--Rachel Luciano, former composition student*

## ***You are a good candidate for Stretch 102-103 if:***

1. you consider yourself an average reader and writer
2. you do not feel ready to begin with a documented research paper
3. you do not feel entirely confident giving advice to other writers
4. you could use some instruction on using the library and developing effective research skills
5. you could use more practice with the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling
6. you prefer working on your writing at a steady, unhurried pace

## **Typical assignments in ENGL 102:**

*“Write a narrative in which you reflect on your development as a writer and reader so far.”*

*“Keep a log of your media habits for one week (TV, internet, social media, texting, etc.). Write an essay in which you examine how your media consumption relates to a larger issue in media usage.”*

## ***Option 2: The One Semester Course***

Some students prefer the intensive one-semester composition class. The final portfolio requirements are the same as in ENGL 103 (the second half of the Stretch sequence), but students have just one semester to fulfill the first year writing requirement.

### **ENGL 105: Composition & Rhetoric I (3 units)**

This one semester course focuses on integrating research into argumentative and persuasive writing. The first assignment is typically a researched paper on the course theme (selected by the class instructor), and the pace is demanding throughout the semester. Students are required to complete at least two major research projects. Many 105 courses include collaborative research and writing.

## **Why take ENGL 105?**

- Work at an intensive pace
- Start immediately with academic research
- Begin demanding writing assignments right away
- Complete the first year writing requirement in one semester

## ***You are a good candidate for ENGL 105 if:***

1. you are a strong reader and writer
2. you feel confident beginning the course with an academic paper that integrates scholarly sources
3. you possess solid library and research skills
4. you are confident about the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling
5. you are ready to work at a fast pace

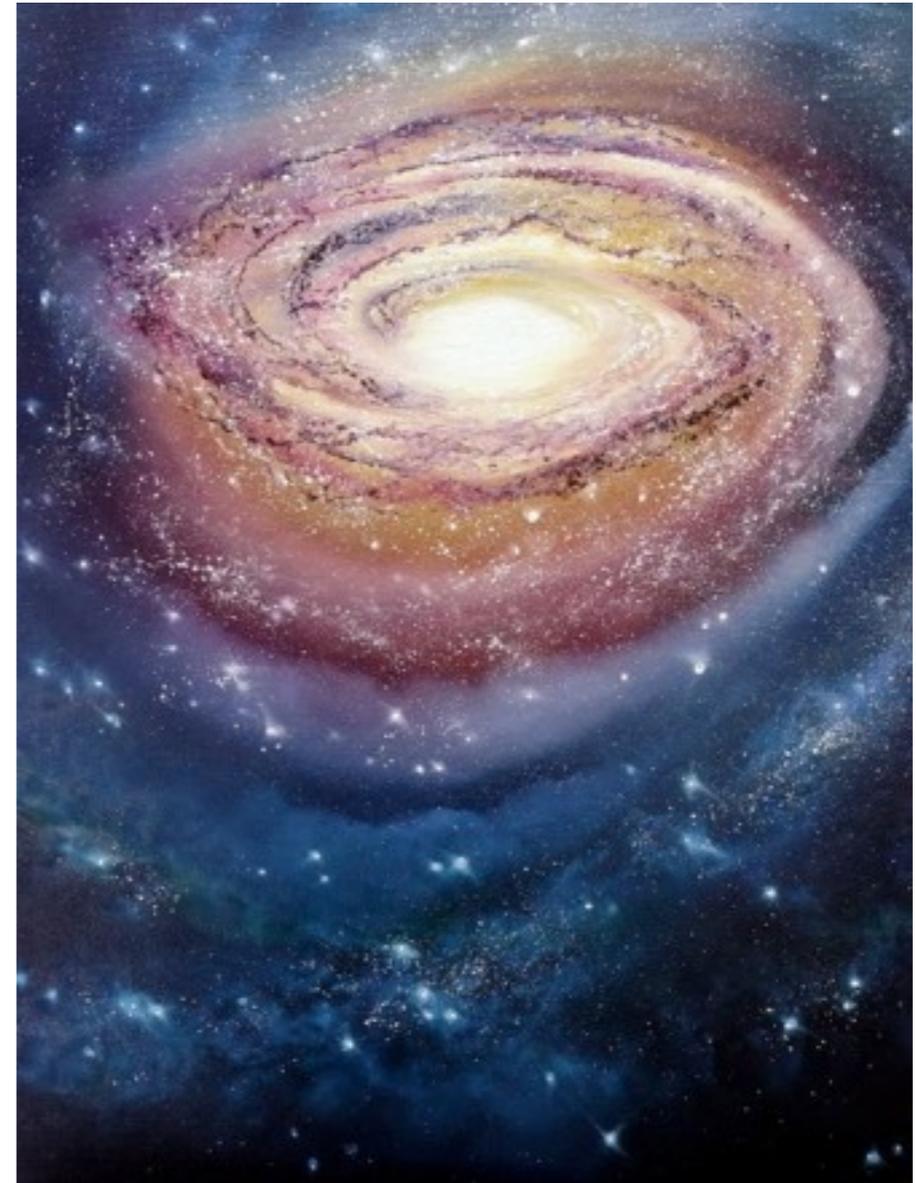
## **Typical assignments in ENGL 105:**

*“Create an annotated bibliography and research proposal on an issue facing millennials. Use multiple sources to explore diverse perspectives on your chosen issue.”*

*“Read several scholarly articles on an issue in the field of rhetoric and composition. Develop, and support with research, your own perspective on the topic.”*

***“If you’re a FastPass worker, take ENGL 105. If you would like to have more time for papers, 102-103 would fit you best.”***

*--Aden Gomez, former composition student*



***“Being able to choose my own level of English has made my first year easier and more worthwhile, since I had time to adjust from high school writing to college writing.”***

*--Vanessa Sherman, former composition student*

## ***Which course should you take?***

There's no "right" answer. That's why CI doesn't use the English Placement Test to place you in a writing class. One test does not reveal too much about the kind of writer you are. No sample of your writing will ever reveal as much as you already know about yourself and your reading, writing, and research skills. So we rely on you to make the most informed decision.

There are no remedial writing courses at CI, so whichever choice you make, you'll be in a course that counts toward graduation and in which you will be expected to produce college-level writing.

The first decision you will want to make is whether the Stretch sequence is best for you, or whether you are prepared for the intensive pace of ENGL 105. The table that follows will help you make that decision. If you find nearly all the statements in the lefthand column fit you, then it's likely you'll feel more comfortable enrolling in the two-semester option. If your answers are distributed nearly equally between columns, then either option should work for you. And if the righthand column describes you, then you'll want to reread the description of ENGL 105.

<b>STRETCH 102-103</b>	<b>ENGL 105</b>
I'm an average reader and writer.	I'm a strong reader and writer.
I prefer beginning with narrative writing.	I am ready to begin with a documented research paper.
I want to learn more about revising.	I know how to use feedback to revise.
I am not very confident giving advice to other writers.	I feel comfortable giving feedback to other writers.
I would prefer a steady pace with time to work on my writing skills.	I feel ready to take on a quicker pace.
I could use help using the library to do research.	I have solid library and research skills.

# THE COMPOSITION PROGRAM

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## ***Final Portfolio:***

To fulfill the CI first year writing requirement, you must submit and pass the final portfolio and the end of ENGL 103 or 105. (The portfolio submitted at the end of ENGL 102 is used to determine your final grade for fall semester but does not fulfill the writing requirement.)

At CI, your composition portfolio will be a collection of your best papers, revised and edited several times. Whichever path you choose, final portfolio requirements in ENGL 103 and 105 are identical; all papers must include research and documentation of sources.

## ***Team Grading & Scoring Criteria:***

Portfolios are graded by the entire composition faculty according to criteria for college-level writing (included in the course syllabus).

The same criteria are used to evaluate all writing in composition classes. You will use them to evaluate your classmate's writing as well as your own work. The criteria are the heart and soul of the composition program. They are revised regularly to make sure they represent the expectations faculty have for college writing.

Written work in composition is not graded by your classroom teacher. Rather, the team of composition faculty evaluates all written work. This system, called team grading, has several advantages:

- *Faculty read portfolios anonymously, without any awareness of those who wrote them, which prevents any bias.*
- *Written work is graded on how well it meets the criteria, not on whether readers agree or disagree with ideas in the paper.*
- *Students do not have to worry about whether their teacher approves of them or their work because classroom teachers do not grade their own students' work.*

## *What if I have AP or IB credit?*

Some students who have AP credit may have already fulfilled the first year writing requirement. However, we believe all students entering the University can still benefit from additional instruction in writing. The Composition Program at CI offers a course for such students:

Our **Advanced Composition** course, **ENGL 107**, may be taken to fulfill the General Education Requirement for Oral Communication (A1) or Critical Thinking (A3). **ENGL 107** is designed for students who are already comfortable with college level writing and research and are looking to take their writing to the next level.

Our **Service Learning** course, **ENGL 206**, may be taken to fulfill the G.E. Requirement for Oral Communication (A1) or English Writing (A2). This course is recommended for students who have already fulfilled their writing requirement in ENGL 103, ENGL 105, or via AP or IB credit.

For additional information or to post questions to our composition faculty, visit our website at <http://english.csuci.edu/program/composition.htm>.



# First Year Writing at CI: The Choice is Yours!

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