

## **Designing Effective Writing Assignments**

### **Be Informative**

- Make up a written assignment in which you elaborate on what you want. Try to be as clear and specific in your description as you can.
- Think about the implications of particular words in your description. For example, are you asking students to explore, discuss, trace, or analyze material? Define these terms for them. Give them an idea of what you will be reading the paper for.

### **Be Purposeful**

- The best assignments are those in which students conceptualize something of interest to them rather than parroting back from lectures or readings.
- Explain how the assignment is connected with writing issues that you want to get across. Are you teaching students how to analyze, support arguments, or handle factual material?
- Use the assignment to teach students about research. How will they integrate primary or secondary material, cite sources, or evaluate the credibility of what they read?

### **Be Helpful**

- Help students link what they already know and do as writers with what you are trying to teach them.
- Provide samples of student papers written for this assignment.
- Specify the criteria you will use in evaluating their writing. Try connecting the criteria with the assignment's overall purpose.
- Provide venues for students to ask questions and develop their ideas throughout the duration of the assignment.
- Identify the audience(s) for an assignment. If students write for you as examiner, for other students in peer workshops, and, ultimately, for other professionals in your field, what do these audiences know and need to know?
- Identify the persona you want students to adopt in writing. Students have to learn the voice, tone, and style that are used in your discipline.
- Schedule elements of the paper to be due at different times. For instance, peer critique of a working thesis, or an annotated bibliography early on.

(adapted from Hildy Miller, Portland State U.)