

A Heuristic to Help You Think About Which Genres to Teach in Your Course

1. Make a list of things you would like your student writers to “do” in your course, things you would like them to “make happen” with writing.
 - For each item, think in terms of Writer, Readers, and Purpose, and maybe Exigence and Context (depending on how fancy you are).
 - Ask yourself: What would you like them to accomplish with this group of readers?
 - For example, you might like your writers to persuade a group of parents to support a new school policy.
 - You might like your writers to argue that there is a gap in the field’s literature that is important and worthwhile to investigate.
 - Or, you might like your writers to persuade a funding agency to give them money to address a local social problem.

2. Make a list of genres people in your field routinely use to accomplish these purposes with these audiences.
 - Choose from that giant list of common genres in your field that you created. Or think of a couple more.
 - For example, teachers might write letters home to parents, or produce brochures, to explain and make the case for new policies. (And use other genres to persuade legislators.)
 - Researchers in your field might write Literature Reviews to identify gaps and argue for their importance.
 - Or, professionals in your field might write proposals that respond to specific RFPs from funding agencies.

3. Analyze those genres in depth, using our handy Genre Analysis Guide.

4. Think about how you might teach the processes and strategies of these genres to your students, and create writing assignments and activities that allow them to learn and practice the genres.