

CYC: DISCIPLINARY WRITING CONVENTIONS



★ Core Terminology

Like many other disciplines, CYC courses refer to recurring key concepts (e.g. “praxis,” “decolonization,” etc.) and theoretical approaches (e.g. “strength-based approach,” “ecological approach,” etc.). As students take more CYC courses, they will become familiar with these ideas and learn to integrate them easily.

★ Theory & Practice (*see additional handout*)

CYC is a practice-oriented program. Many CYC assignments challenge students to consider the relationship between theoretical approaches and practical experiences. Sometimes it is relatively easy to discuss theories or practices on their own, but the difficult task is discussing them *together*.

★ Course & Assignment Specifics

CYC courses focus on discipline-specific content (generally students do not take electives outside of CYC). Moreover, CYC assignments tend to be thorough and distinct. Carefully reading assignment outlines will provide many clues about what professors are looking for. Students can usually structure their written work based on the assignment guidelines; just follow the instructions and respond to each part or question in the order presented. If ever in doubt, refer back to the specifics of the syllabus and grading guidelines.

★ Critical Engagement with Readings

Course readings are an important part of the learning process, and students are expected to critically engage with, and analyze, these texts. When making an argument, students should support their positions with reference to the readings, which might involve offering a favourable assessment of the reading(s), a critique, or both.

★ Reflective Writing (Critical Self-Reflection) (*see additional handout*)

Self-reflection is a significant component of CYC writing assignments. CYC students are often asked to reflect on their counseling experiences and/or practice videos (citing time pinpoints in the recording), conveying both their strengths and areas to work on. Also, students are recurrently asked to reflect on their “social location,” identifying their position within the broader context of societal power relations.

★ Observational (and/or Report-Style) Writing

Observational writing adopts a more descriptive style, requiring students to record their counseling observations in as unbiased a manner as possible (although everyone has a perspective). The aim is objectively to observe and record details from the counselling interaction. Writing about practice videos may require transcribing actual recorded events and/or referring to time pinpoints in the video.

★ Other Assignments & Forms of Communication

Sometimes CYC courses also include collaborative group papers and projects, as well as presentations (both individual and group). Also, some assignments may provide the opportunity to engage with more art-based forms of expression, such as drawings, images, collages, poetry, photography, and more.

★ APA (American Psychological Association) Style Guide (*see additional handout*)

Generally, CYC uses the APA Style Guide. Students are commonly encouraged to use headings in their assignments—in accordance with APA guidelines—in order to divide their papers into helpful subsections.

★ CYC Aspirations

With respect to writing, CYC hopes that students will learn how to communicate effectively, present followable ideas, engage in critical analysis, and make useful connections (across theories, course readings, reflections, and practical experiences). More broadly, two CYC aspirations for students might be: (1) developing oneself to help others, and (2) learning to understand others’ points of view.

