

Undergraduate Course Description Guidelines

Wake Forest University

The Curriculum Committee asks that departments please follow the guidelines below when drafting course descriptions for the Undergraduate Bulletin—it will make our job a lot easier!

1. Keep descriptions as concise as possible, focusing on subject content (rather than course activities, for example). A target word-limit of 45 words or less, including course title, is recommended.
2. Begin with a noun phrase which identifies the nature of the course. For example, “Study of...”, “Inquiry into...”, or “Introduction to...” Please avoid opening the description with a full sentence such as “The course is designed to...” or “This course will attempt to...” Another common opening is to use a verb such as “Explores...”, “Examines...”, “Surveys...”, “Studies...”, etc.
3. Write the description in the third person, and using the present tense.
4. While it may be appropriate to cite examples of subjects that will be covered, such lists should be kept as short as possible and generally be illustrative rather than comprehensive.
5. Write numerical modifiers of centuries using numbers, such as “in the 21st century” or “16th -century music,” rather than as full words.
6. Use a comma before the “and” or “or” in a series. (ex. Rome, Florence, Milan, and Venice)
7. Statements about the course being repeatable or cross-listed or having Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading are also part of the description and should always be included when drafting or editing a course description.

Helpful examples:

1. 105. Monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (3h) Examines the history, thought, and practices of these three monotheistic traditions in global perspective. Focus varies by instructor. (D)
2. 320. British Drama to 1642. (3h) British drama from its beginning to 1642, exclusive of Shakespeare. Representative cycle plays, moralities, Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies. Also listed as THE 320. (D)
3. 150. Literature Interprets the World. (3h) Introduction to ways literary artists shape experience, focusing on one topic or selected topics; primarily discussion; writing intensive. P—ENG 111 or exemption from ENG 111. (D)
4. 116. On-Camera Performance. (3h) Introduces the theory and practice of performing for the camera. Covers basic method acting, newscasting, and other performance formats. Also listed as THE 141.

It might also be helpful to know what the students will see on WIN when they are registering for their classes. WIN/Banner can allow Course/Section Titles to be 30 characters long with an additionally added long title to be 100 characters in length. So, the maximum is 100 characters, which would include spaces, punctuation, or diacritical marks that's the bottom line for the purposes of the Bulletin.