

Tips for Success: Finding the right course materials

- 1) **Check the listing carefully:** Make sure to identify the correct course(s) for you. Sometimes there are multiple sections of a course with different instructors (such as Writ101) and they require different materials. Sometimes the course requires multiple books or has a book/fee combination. It is important to read all the way through each course listing that is applicable to you.
- 2) **Start the Search Process Early:** In general, there is a greater supply of textbooks available in the shared pool earlier in the process. Remember that there may be students across the country that are in need of the same book as you. You also want to allow plenty of shipping time, especially because there may be interruptions to the system due to the pandemic.
- 3) **Know Your Options:** You will see a price quoted on the course textbook listing for each book. The source of the price will be indicated. When available the price quoted is from the Publisher (and is often the classic hard or soft cover textbook), because this price is not likely to change much in the short term. In the vast majority of cases, this is NOT the cheapest option. **It is greatly to your benefit to shop around, learn your options and find the most competitive prices.** You can save a great deal by purchasing a used text, renting a new or used text, or selecting an eText option. Just be sure to verify what is included in your selection. At times there are access codes or other supplemental materials that may not be guaranteed with certain options. When in doubt check with your professor before making a purchase.

Search Tips:

- i. Check multiple websites. Amazon and Barnes & Noble are well-known in the textbook industry and are especially competitive in new textbook pricing, but also offer lots of other options. Chegg.com is an especially useful company for used and rental options. There are plenty more though, in particular if you are searching for used books! Googling an ISBN number can often provide some good leads. There are even price comparison sites for textbooks, but I recommend exercising some due diligence when you follow the trail of an option.
- ii. When you find a promising option, **double check that the edition (and ISBN – see note below) match the book** that your instructor has specified on the listing.
 1. A note on ISBNs: International Standard Book Numbers are intended to be a unique identifier of a book, specific to an edition. It is ALSO specific to the format, meaning if a book can be found in hardback, paperback, and digital options it will have an ISBN for each of those formats. In most cases only one ISBN is provided on the listing. You can use it to identify the correct text. From there you can select other formats that may have different

ISBNs, but match (title, edition, authors etc.) the originally intended text.

- iii. Consider additional costs and benefits: Take note of the shipping cost and timeline, the return policy, in case you decide to drop or switch courses (you may want to factor this into the timeline of when to make your purchase), and any potential buyback opportunities.
- iv. Glance at the “Access Notes” on the listing: you will find an indication there if an eText option is potentially available, as well as if there is the possibility of purchasing the book on campus. More information will be forthcoming on the procedure for purchasing a book or books on campus. Please remember though, this option is not available for all books and only in very limited quantities for some!

- 4) **Know Where to Go for Help:** Some form of a customer service option should be available on any of the online shopping sites (instead of “customer service” it might look like “help” or “contact us” or “need assistance?”). These are a good source for technical questions about using the website, or about a particular order that you have placed. In addition, we at the College recognize that this may be a new process for some of you and want you to feel supported. If you have any questions, or simply feel unsure of where to start, please do not hesitate to reach out to Amanda Miller at amanda.miller@brynathyn.edu