



# Course Syllabus: Academic Writing I

**Course Section:** ENG 121.CA14

**Meeting:** MWF 12:30–13:20, school of business building, room 225

**Prerequisite:** Passing grade in ENG 002 or satisfactory score on the English Placement Test

**Term:** Fall 2014

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Professor:** Chris Friend

**Email:** christopher.friend@saintleo.edu

**Office:** Saint Edward Hall 238

**Office Hours:** MF 14:00–15:00 and TR 13:00–15:00; appointments strongly recommended. Visit <http://friend.lattiss.com> for availability.

## 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Academic Writing I is designed to teach students to communicate effectively in an academic environment. The goal of the course is to provide instruction, practice, and discussion to improve students' communication skills. Students will write for a variety of purposes and audiences and in a variety of rhetorical modes. The focus of the course is on practical, relevant, academic writing skills. Although good prose models are used throughout the course, the students' writing is the primary focus. All students will present one formal speech.

See Table 1 for an overview of the topics studied in this course and a list of the major required papers.

## 2. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through successful completion of this course and its activities, you should be able to

- Perfect the ability to write clear theses.
- Demonstrate proficiency in writing well-constructed introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs.

- Demonstrate the ability to revise and proofread various kinds of writing.
- Demonstrate proficiency in producing, revising, and editing drafts of an essay.
- Demonstrate proficiency in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Improve your critical thinking, problem solving, writing style, and speaking skills.
- Develop proficiency in writing a five-paragraph essay in the various rhetorical modes.

### 3. KEY CORE VALUES

Although all six of Saint Leo University (SLU)'s core values should be evident in the daily operation of our class and in every assignment you complete, the School of Arts & Sciences has chosen two as the key core values for this course.

**Integrity:** The SLU commitment to excellence “demands that its members live its mission and deliver on its promise. The faculty, staff, and students pledge to be honest, just, and consistent in word and deed.” We will demonstrate integrity by presenting our own work genuinely and our ideas honestly, both in discussion and in writing.

**Respect:** At SLU, “we value all individuals’ unique talents, respect their dignity, and strive to foster their commitment to excellence in our work. Our community’s strength depends on the unity and diversity of our people; on the free exchange of ideas; and on learning, living, and working harmoniously.” We will demonstrate respect in our dealings with others, including our peers with us in class and the authors whose work inspires or informs our discussion and writing.

### 4. MATERIALS FOR CLASS

- Required
  - (1) Harris and Kunka, *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*, Ninth Edition (ISBN 978-0-321-92131-4)
  - (2) Saint Leo University, *The Academic Writing Reader* (ISBN 0-536-97592-2)
  - (3) Reliable connection to the Internet outside of class. Make a plan for what you will do/use if your device or connection dies.
  - (4) Automated, reliable backup system. Every semester, I have a student who loses everything due to a hard drive failure. Don’t be that student.
  - (5) Regular access to your student email account. I check my email multiple times per day and will almost always reply within one business day. You should to check yours *at least* once per day, but definitely before each class meeting. (Why not set it up on your phone?)
- Recommended
  - (1) A Google account associate with your SLU email address. We will use this account for collaborative writing and to make document submission simpler. We will set this up on the second day of class.

GRADE	MIN. POINTS		
A	94		
A–	90		
B+	88		
B	84		
B–	80		
C+	78		
C	74		
C–	70		
D+	68		
D	60		
F	<60		

  

COMPONENT	POINTS
Products (essays & other writing)	50
Process (participation & collaboration)	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) Grade Calculations

(b) Grade Distribution

FIGURE 1. Course Grading System

- (2) Your own computer running a full (non-mobile) operating system. Some of the work we do is much simpler with new software and the ability to run multiple programs simultaneously. Phones are too limited, and tablets can get frustrating. (Campus computer labs can work in a pinch.)

## 5. GRADING & ASSESSMENT

Please note the following distinctive characteristics about grading in this course:

- You can earn a D for an assignment or major component, but you cannot earn a D for this course. To pass, you must earn at least a C, or 74 points. **Earning a C– is not sufficient.**
- The grade of NC (no credit) can be assigned at the instructor's discretion only if you complete all course work on time, participate fully, and fail to produce satisfactory work for the class.

**5.1. Grading Standards.** Participation in all activities, and successful completion of all assignments (as defined by each assignment's assessment rubric) will earn you a passing grade of C, indicating that you have achieved the expected outcomes of the course. If you do not take part in all assignments and activities, you should not expect a passing grade in the course. If the quality of your work or your participation falls below acceptable standards (i.e. if you are heading for failure), I will be sure to let you know. Along more optimistic lines, grades of B or A are used for work that is good and excellent, respectively, surpassing the basic expectations. Assignment sheets will suggest ways to exceed those expectations, so you won't have to guess. If your performance exceeds basic standards, I will be sure to let you know.

5.2. **Expectations.** While enrolled in this course, you can expect these things from me:<sup>1</sup>

- enthusiasm for learning, teaching, and writing;
- clarity and thoroughness in assignments, goals, and expectations;
- personal interest in your learning and work;
- flexibility, allowing you the freedom to be creative with the products you create for this course;
- critical feedback to help you improve your thinking and writing; and
- preparation to ensure a beneficial and productive semester.

If at any point you feel I am failing to meet any of those expectations, please let me know. Your feedback is the best way I can learn how to improve my teaching.

As we progress through the semester, your peers and I will expect these things from you:

- consistent and active participation in class activities, including peer review assignments;
- informed contributions, based on sufficient preparation and consideration (i.e. doing the readings and research)
- an open mind, tolerant and curious about differences of opinion; and
- honest and polite commentary and feedback that helps your peers improve their work.

During class discussions and as you work on your assignments, keep in mind that I value these things in my students:

- thought-out and supported opinions;
- willingness to take risks and try new approaches to solving problems, as risks often create the greatest opportunities;
- creativity in how you respond to the challenges created and faced by this course; and
- excellence in your work, showing the best you can produce.

## 6. COURSE CONTENTS

The first day of class will involve discussion about what students think would be the best way for them to achieve the Student Learning Outcomes. In general, this class will consist of writing and discussing your ideas, reading the ideas of others, and then writing again to see whether or how the ideas of others integrate with your initial thinking. Because we will determine how class progresses together, and because we are interested in a diverse range of ideas, your active participation in class discussions is the most essential component of a successful semester. This importance is reflected in the grading system used for this course.

The units presented below (and the information in Table 1) are suggestions, presented in a suggested order. We will discuss, debate, and decide how the class will actually flow on the first day of class.

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<sup>1</sup>The structure and approach of the Expectations section is adapted from the English 239 syllabus of Cheryl E. Ball, ISU.

### 6.1. Rules, Regulations, and Following Orders.

**Guiding question:** What should we do in this class?

**Working unit:** Whole class

**Reading responses:** Selections from these options:

**Stanley Milgram:** “The Perils of Obedience” (p. 653)

**Anthony Burgess:** from *A Clockwork Orange* (p. 246)

**Joseph M. Williams:** “The Phenomenology of Error” (get from LearningStudio)

**John Warner:** “Rethinking My Cell Phone/Computer Policy” (get from LearningStudio)

**Michael Kleine:** “What Is It We Do...?” (get from LearningStudio)

**Your choice:** Find related content online

**Survey:** What kinds of writing are done in other disciplines/classes? (Ask other teachers.)

**Product:** Detailed assignment plans—What will you do for each unit, and what is the focus of each? Are they built around required assignments, interesting topics, traditional writing concepts, or something else?

**Essay:** Narrative form telling how the process [reflected/challenged/reinforced/etc] your core values. Audience: SLU administration, other writing teachers, or someone else?

### 6.2. The Value of Education.

**Guiding question:** Is teaching writing actually important?

**Working unit:** Large teams

**Reading responses:** Selections from these options:

**Jonathan Kozol:** “The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society” (p. 158)

**Temple Grandin:** “Thinking in Pictures” (p. 208)

TABLE 1. Proposed Assignment Overview

WEEKS	UNIT	MAJOR PAPERS
1	Planning the Term	Course Calendar
2–5	The Rules of Writing	Narrative Essay Assignment Sheets & Rubrics
6–8	Teaching Writing	Expository Essay Document, type TBD
9–11	Writing in Society	Descriptive Essay Project Proposal
12–15	Writing for Change	Persuasive Essay Campaign Plan Oral Presentation/“Pitch”

**David Rothenberg:** “How the Web Destroys...” (p. 182)

**Your choice:** Anything else in Chapter 3

**Josh Keller:** “Studies Explore...” (get from LearningStudio)

**Helen Keller:** “The Day Language Came into My Life” (p. 206)

**Aldous Huxley:** “Propaganda Under a Dictatorship” (p. 235)

**Your choice:** Anything in Chapter 10—The Artistic Impulse

**Your choice:** Find related content online

**Survey:** Why do we teach writing? (Ask college graduates, especially those in your intended field.)

**Product:** Class-chosen genre; audience probably past selves, younger students, or former teachers.

**Essay:** Expository form defining *education* and explaining its function from multiple sides, examining multiple values/perspectives.

### 6.3. Issues in Popular Culture.

**Guiding question:** How do we change society?

**Working unit:** Small groups

**Reading responses:** Selections from these options:

**Juliet B. Schor:** “The Culture of Consumerism” (p. 256)

**Philip Slater:** “Want-Creation Fuels Americans’ Addictiveness” (p. 264)

**Your choice:** Anything else in Chapter 5

**Your choice:** Anything in Chapter 9—The Impact of Technology

**Nicholas Carr:** “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” (get from LearningStudio)

**Your choice:** Find related content online

**Survey:** Your group will design its own question(s) and choose a relevant audience.

**Product:** Project proposal for a group-selected change agent. How do changes happen in a large [institutional/governmental/regional] scale?

**Presentation:** Your group will create a Pecha Kucha to “pitch” your project to your peers.

**Essay:** Descriptive form focusing on the problem. [To consider in discussion: Should the essay include the solution?]

**6.4. Personal Project Unit.** For this unit, you will create your own products, rather than contributing to group products. Whether you still work in groups as you progress will be determined by class discussion. Because the product is individual, you will have more choice regarding what you read and create.

The expectations below apply to whichever option you choose to study.

**Working unit:** Individual

**Interview:** Chat with a small number of people (1–3) about the issue you chose.

**Product:** Plan a campaign to bring about awareness or change based on the issues studied; present that plan to the class

**Presentation:** Your group will create a Pecha Kucha to “pitch” your project to your peers.

**Essay:** Persuasive form, perhaps intended for *The Lions’ Pride* campus newspaper or an online blog posting.

6.4.1. *Matters of Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion (Option 1).*

**Guiding question:** How do we make complex decisions?

**Reading responses:** Selections from these options:

**Philip Wheelwright:** “The Meaning of Ethics” (p. 628)

**Your choice:** Anything else in Chapter 11

**Your choice:** Find related content online

6.4.2. *The Pursuit of Justice (Option 2).*

**Guiding question:** How do we determine what is “fair”?

**Working unit:** Individual

**Reading responses:** Selections from these options:

**Barbara Ehrenreich:** “Nickel-and-Dimed” (p. 474)

**Your choice:** Anything else in Chapter 8

**Coward, Ashe, or Kantowitz:** from Pop Culture chapter (see top of p. viii)

**Your choice:** Find related content online

## 7. POLICIES & MISCELLANEA

**7.1. Participation.** Your attendance is mandatory, and your success in this course depends on your active engagement. If you are absent more than three times, your final grade will be reduced by one letter grade per additional day missed; therefore, after three absences, I recommend that you drop the class. If you are absent more than five times, you risk failing the course. If you must be absent, it is *your* responsibility to complete the day’s activities and contact your peers to determine what you missed and how you need to recover. Any absence will cause you to forfeit credit for any participation or activities for those days.

Absences due to university-sponsored events—such as music performances, athletic competitions, debates, and some conferences—can excuse you from certain minor assignments (but not major papers). When participating in school-sponsored events, get the appropriate form from the organization sponsor and submit it to your instructor before you miss class. Absences due to religious holidays not observed by the university should be discussed with the instructor during the first week of the semester.

Please note these details:

- (1) Major assignments will be submitted online, so attendance (or lack thereof) does not affect your ability to submit work. You are still expected to turn in your work regardless of whether you are in class that day.
- (2) For the purposes of this attendance policy, arriving tardy to class twice equals one absence.
- (3) I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. If you are not in class, we cannot benefit from your participation, and you are absent. I consider university-sponsored events (mentioned in the paragraph above) the equivalent of attendance.

Treat participation in class activities (including discussions, peer review assignments, etc.) as evidence of attending to the course. I expect complete participation on all assignments from each student. We all know that the most boring classes are the ones where the instructor does all the talking. Don’t let that become the case here. Share your thinking, provide your opinion, and join in the work. When in doubt, speak your mind—it’s the only way your peers and your instructor will know what you’re thinking, and the only way we can compliment, complement, or correct, as appropriate.

**7.2. Late and Make-Up Work.** Major writing assignments will be submitted online, and computers are good at treating deadlines as absolutes. You will not be able to submit work late; I expect that you will be prepared. Minor activities done in class are designed to take advantage of the live interactions of all students and cannot be meaningfully “made up” after the class has ended; therefore, there is no make-up work in this class.

**7.3. Etiquette.** In short, the members of this class, both the instructor and the students, are expected to behave courteously and professionally in all interactions. Under that umbrella statement, the following general guidelines should be followed in any class here at SLU.

**Tolerance:** Many of our discussions will be driven by opinions and based on challenging material. Since we are all writers, everyone in class will have personal experiences and viewpoints that can contribute meaning to the conversations. All participants are expected to treat others with dignity and respect and are expected to refrain from insensitive comments, including racist, ageist, sexist, classist, homophobic, or other disparaging and unwarranted views.

**Timeliness:** Students are expected to be ready for class at its designated time just as much as you expect the instructor to dismiss class by the designated time. Should you arrive to class late for any reason, please do so with a minimum level of disruption. If you need to leave class early for any reason, please notify the instructor in advance and be as non-disruptive as possible when leaving.

**Phones:** As a courtesy, all phones should be silenced during this or any other class. Should your phone accidentally create a distraction during class, you should take action to eliminate the distraction without adding to it.



**Computers:** You will need to use your computer in class regularly to collaborate with others and complete your assignments. Having the discipline of shutting off distractions (such as Facebook, chat applications, etc.) improves your ability to focus and participate meaningfully.

**Messages:** Grammar, spelling, and punctuation reflect the formality of the situation in which they appear. Keep in mind that emails and discussion posts you write for this class are being read by an English teacher in a composition course. Though I don't expect discussion posts to be perfectly error-free (they're not that important), I do expect you to treat written language with respect. Complete sentences and full words ("you" instead of "u") are always a good idea, even if the intended audience is your peers.

**Email:** As a SLU student, you have access to a student email account, which will be the primary method of communication for course-related announcements and information. Your instructor generally replies to messages within 24 hours Sunday through Thursday; messages sent on Fridays or Saturdays might get a delayed response.

**7.4. Computer Reliability.** Save everything, and save often. Computer problems are regular part of life, and I expect you to prepare for them rather than use them as an excuse for late work. Every semester, your instructor has students sustain a complete hard drive failure, losing all their work. Such failures are unavoidable, but losing data is not, if you plan ahead. Working backups and protection from Windows viruses are essential to avoid the most common catastrophes. A free Dropbox account (<http://dropbox.com>) provides convenient and automatic backups, allows you to access your files from any networked computer in case disaster befalls yours, and preserves old versions of files so that if a file is deleted or altered, a previous copy can be restored. Regardless of the solution you choose, know how you will keep moving if your computer fails.

**7.5. Honor Code.** Saint Leo University holds all students to the highest standards of honesty and personal integrity in every phase of their academic life. All students have a responsibility to uphold the Academic Honor Code by refraining from any form of academic misconduct, presenting only work that is genuinely their own, and reporting any observed instance of academic dishonesty to a faculty member.

Complete details can be found in the full SLU Academic Honor Code, from which the above paragraph was excerpted. Additionally, SLU's Core Values include Integrity, by which we "pledge to be honest, just, and consistent in word and deed."

**7.6. Commitment to Academic Excellence.** Academic excellence is reflected by balance and growth in mind, body, and spirit that develops a more effective and creative culture for students, faculty, and staff. It promotes integrity, honesty, personal responsibility, fairness, and collaboration at all levels of the university. At the level of students, excellence means achieving mastery of the specific intellectual content, critical thinking, and practical skills that develop reflective, globally conscious, and informed citizens ready to meet the challenges of a complex world.

**7.7. Instructor's Research.** For the purposes of conducting research or improving his teaching practices, your instructor may use your work anonymously as an example in other classes, in workshops and lectures, or in publications. For example, I might quote from one of your assignments in a journal article or conference presentation, without revealing your identity. If you do **not** wish your work to be used in this manner, let me know in writing (via email is fine) within one week after the date your final grade is due. (This date is listed on SLU's Academic Calendar.) Your course grade will not be affected by your decision to permit or deny my use of your work.<sup>2</sup>

## 8. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

**8.1. Library Resources.** You may find that libraries and their resources, both online and on-ground, come in handy for this course. You have a few options, including but not limited to, the below:

**8.1.1. *Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library.*** Librarians are available in the University Campus library during reference hours to answer questions concerning research strategies, database searching, locating specific materials, and interlibrary loan (ILL). Learn more about library services and check their hours by visiting their LibGuides page (<http://saintleo.libguides.com/calendar>) or search their catalog from their main page (<http://saintleo.edu/library>).

**8.1.2. *Community Libraries.*** Almost all public library systems offer free borrowing privileges to local community members, as well as free access to their online databases, including access from your home. The key is obtaining a library card. Check with your local library to find out how to get a borrower's card.

**8.1.3. *The Library at USF.*** University Campus students have borrowing privileges at the University of South Florida. Be sure to bring a current Saint Leo student ID card and proof of current enrollment with you to borrow USF library books.

**8.2. Writing Resources on Campus.** While on University Campus, SLU students have access to two helpful resources targeted specifically at writing assistance. Basically, we offer two places where you can get free tutoring and after-class help with your writing.

**8.2.1. *Writing and Research Instruction at the Library.*** The Cannon Memorial Library now offers instruction in writing and research to students of all levels, across the curriculum. Ángel L. Jiménez and John David Harding offer instruction on all aspects and stages of the writing process. Please make an appointment by visiting their website (<http://saintleolibrary.cloudaccess.net/research-writing-help.html>).

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<sup>2</sup>The "Instructor's Research" section is adapted from the syllabus of Beth Rapp-Young, UCF.

8.2.2. *Learning Resource Center.* The Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides tutoring services for all SLU students. The LRC is located on the second floor of the Student Activities Building and appointments are available through TutorTrac or on a walk-in basis. When attending a session you will need to bring: course syllabus, course notes and materials presented in class, course textbook(s), and any questions you have for the tutor. An English tutor will be able to help you:

- Understand assignment requirements
- Develop ideas
- Plan and organize your writing
- Identify and address some key aspects of your writing for you to revise
- Learn to cite and document sources
- Practice strategies for proofreading and editing
- Learn to correct errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics

8.3. **Accommodations.** Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has both contacted the Office of Disability Services [Student Activities Building 207, phone (352) 588-8464, fax (352) 588-8605, or email [adaoffice@saintleo.edu](mailto:adaoffice@saintleo.edu)] and contacted the instructor to discuss appropriate accommodations.

More personally, I am dedicated to incorporating inclusive practices for all students within the classroom, as well as providing for specific accommodation requests. Beyond the provisions of the Office of Disability Services, please feel free to contact me with any suggestions and/or requests you have regarding the accessibility of information and/or interactions in this course. I am always interested in these types of suggestions, as they may not only meet a specific student's needs but could also be employed to make the overall class more accessible and inclusive for all students.<sup>3</sup>

## 9. WORKS CITED

Harris, Muriel and Jennifer L. Kunka. *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*. Ninth Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2015. Print.  
Saint Leo University. *The Academic Writing Reader*. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2006. Print.

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<sup>3</sup>The second ¶ in the "Accommodations" section is adapted from the syllabus of Barbi Smyser-Fauble, ISU.