

Instructor: Stacy Bell
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Office: Humanities 105
Office hours: MTW2:00-4:00, and by appointment

Required Texts

Satrapı *Persepolis*
Vapnyar *There Are Jews in My House*
Zhang *Socialism Is Great!*
Miscellaneous assigned readings

Course Description & Objectives

This course is an examination of grammar, mechanics and principles of effective written expression, with primary emphasis on the expository essay. Writing topics are interdisciplinary, to emphasize the importance of effective written communication across the curriculum. This section of English 185 is required specifically for students for whom English is not the native language. Students who have been admitted to Oxford are expected to function at a high level of proficiency in English. However, concurrent with the college's mission and goals, language support is necessary for students who are studying in the United States for the first time; for foreign-born students who continue to struggle with English grammatical forms and idioms; and for native born students who use more than one language in the home. Research in second language acquisition suggests that generation 1.5 students who speak the parents' language at home may have difficulties with writing "Standard" English, even if they speak and read it fluently.

Language teachers may distinguish between fluency and "accuracy" in a student's written work; however, teachers in other disciplines may expect strict adherence to "standard" grammatical forms. Languages are valuable resources, but often it is necessary for multilingual students to negotiate situations in which their resources are undervalued or misunderstood. There is debate among language teachers about the extent to which grammar instruction leads to mastery of standard grammar. The emphasis in this course will be on reviewing grammatical structures which pose difficulties for non-native speakers. It is likely that some students in this course will benefit from direct grammar instruction. You will continue to develop your skills in identifying and correcting grammatical errors in their written work; the revision process is crucial, and you will be expected to write multiple drafts and to seek help outside the classroom.

Improving oral communication skills is also very important for nonnative English speakers in the U.S. university system. To this end you will have multiple opportunities throughout the semester to lead discussions, to read your written work aloud, and present your research during class.

About me: language teachers may be put into two categories, prescriptivists and descriptivists. I am in the latter category. Everyone learns language at her own pace, and

mastering a second language can take an entire lifetime for some. There is Standard English, preferred by many in the academy. In addition there are many Englishes, varieties spoken by different groups all around the world. Some varieties carry a harsher “stigma” than others, depending on how distinct they are from the “standard.” If your goal is to master Standard English I will help you do that, but I will also encourage you to be patient in your own process.

You will examine the differences between spoken and written English and will apply this knowledge in the process of expository, narrative and argumentative writing. In this class we do rhetorical and literary analysis of texts that examine cultural conflict, the immigrant experience, and cultural and ethnic diversity. You should be able to distinguish facts from claims and to formulate and support your own arguments; in rhetorical analysis you analyze the use of the various rhetorical forms utilized in other authors’ arguments. In literary analysis we discuss what a story “means” and how the author creates that meaning. You will need to read in order to write your essays, and if you don’t, I will know.

You will submit a short [250-350 words] essay and a longer essay [1000 words] for each text. The word limit is strictly enforced. In some cases your short responses will be developed into longer essays. You will be required to use secondary sources for some essays and to practice applying MLA guidelines for documenting sources; practicing research skills is mandatory in 185, and you will be visiting the library twice this semester for research instruction with Mary Moser.

Evaluation

Essays: You will write one short response and one longer essay for each book we read.

3 short responses: $5\% \times 3 = 15\%$ of your final grade

3 essays: $10\% \times 3 = 30\%$

**Note:* An essay with more than five spelling errors will receive a failing grade--NO EXCEPTIONS.

Free writing: At the beginning of each class you will respond in writing to an assigned prompt for three minutes. You will receive full credit [100 points] for these writing exercises if you do not have more than two unexcused absences. Free Writing is 5% of your final grade.

Oral presentations: each of you will lead a class discussion of our text or an assigned topic. You will sign up at the very beginning of the semester for the day you will lead. Your oral presentation is 5% of your final grade. If you are absent without an excuse on your assigned day, you cannot make it up.

Debate: On November 23 your class will engage in a planned debate. You will be assigned to one of two teams and each team will submit a well-written thesis statement of your position and an annotated bibliography of 6 sources; each team member must

speak during the debate. I will assess your team's performance through an informal rubric and your classmates will decide the winner. Your debate thesis + bibliography is 5% of your final grade.

Current issues research presentation: Working in groups of three or four, you will research a current event related to the issues raised in our books. Each of you will submit a minimum 1200 word research paper with an annotated bibliography of 6 sources. Each of you will do the research and writing independently—do NOT share sources—but you will collaborate to present your research to the class. I will assess your team's presentation through an informal rubric. Your research paper is 20% of your final grade.

Your final exam will be a written response to a film we will view together in class. Your final exam will be 20% of your final class grade.

Business

Blackboard: Your class conference, including all information about assignments, your grades and your class syllabus, is available to you on Blackboard. You are responsible for knowing the information and materials posted there.

Office Hours: Please sign up for an appointment. There will be a sign up sheet outside my door every week. If you cannot see me during office hours, speak to me after class to arrange an appointment.

Late Essays: Your essays are due at the *beginning* of class on the specified date. I will lower the grade for an unexcused late essay by one full letter grade for each day it is late; after one full week the essay will receive a grade of zero.

Attendance: I will not distinguish between tardies and absences. You may miss three days of class without penalty; after that, you will lose 10 points from your First Words grade for each absence.

Email: Use email for the following reasons:

- To cancel an appointment
- To notify me of an absence
- To ask a legitimate question about an assignment
- To say hello!

I delete emails requesting information contained in the syllabus. I delete emails about grades. Let's have those conversations in person; let me know and I will be happy to talk to you in my office. Your grades and averages will be available to you on our Blackboard site.

Plagiarism: The work you submit for class must be your own. You may not submit an essay more than once. If you use another author's words or original ideas in your writing, you must give credit to the author by using MLA documentation form as it is presented in *The Bedford Handbook*. All papers suspected of plagiarism will be turned over to the

Honor Council (*Oxford College Handbook*). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, read your handbook and please see me.

Electronic toys: Laptops are permitted when I require them in class. Silence your phone and put it away during class.

A Note about Printing: Blue and gold makes green! Print preliminary drafts on recycled paper, and print double-sided final drafts to save paper. You must turn in paper copies of all your essays, no exceptions.

AUGUST

25 Introduction and Objectives

30 Discussion leader:

Intellectual property—What is it? Does it matter?

Reading assignment: “Plagiarism Lines Blur for Students in Digital Age”;
“Toward a Rational Response to Plagiarism”

SEPTEMBER

1 How to write an email; how to speak in class

Persepolis: Cultural identity and social change

6 Discussion leader:

8 Response Due

13 Discussion leader:

15 Discussion leader:

20 Essay Due

Socialism Is Great!: What's your story?

22 Discussion leader:

27 Discussion leader:

29 Response Due

OCTOBER

4 Class will meet in library today for instruction with Mary Moser.

6 Discussion leader:

11 FALL BREAK—Class will not meet today.

13 Class will not meet today.

18 Essay Due

There Are Jews in My House: Melting pot, salad bowl, or is it all a lie?

20 Discussion leader:

25 Discussion leader:

27 Class will not meet today.
Response due

NOVEMBER

1 Class will meet in library today for instruction with Mary Moser.

3 Discussion leader:

8 *Essay* due

10 Group Presentations:

15 Group Presentations:
Research papers due

17 Debate
Thesis + bibliography due

22 Debate
Thesis + bibliography due

24 THANKSGIVING BREAK-- Class will not meet today.

29

DECEMBER

1 Film

6 Film and Review

Exam Schedule

Students will report to classroom with laptops during their appointed time: Friday, Dec. 9, 2:00-5:00 pm.

Supplemental Instructor!

Sophomore Haotian Zhang is the SI for ENG 185 ML 10J. He will be available to help you with any aspect of the class, from understanding the basic concepts in rhetorical and literary analysis, to practicing your research skills. Please take advantage of his assistance.