

# English 125.002: College Writing

**Fall 2008:**

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## Course Description

Learning to write good college prose is a lot like learning to be a great cake designer. The folks on *Ace of Cakes* can no more show up at a formal wedding with an animatronic Britney Spears cake (with sparklers) than they can show up with an undercooked puddle of Betty Crocker cake mix – at least, not if they expect to get paid. A really great cake has to be delicious, of course, but it also has to be structurally sound, it has to be beautiful, and, crucially, it has to be appropriate to the party.

Your writing is very similar. You can write a well-structured logical argument with insightful commentary and mastery of your topic, but if it reads like a lost James Joyce short story or cribbed Radiohead lyrics you're unlikely to get an 'A'. Your job in college is not merely to understand what you're taught but to synthesize and demonstrate your learning in the language appropriate to the party.

That's where this class comes in. We're going to hone our writing skills, learn to pay attention to form as well as content, and get a lot of practice writing.

**Class Meetings:** M, W, & F 8:00 - 9:00am in 2454 Mason Hall

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30 to 9:30 in 455b Lorch Hall

## Textbook & Supplies

- *A Pocket Style Manual (fifth edition)* by Diana Hacker. ISBN: 0312452756. Available at Shaman Drum and online.
- looseleaf paper and a comfortable writing implement for in-class writing.

# Grades & Course Requirements

## Academic Honesty

<http://lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/plagNote.asp>  
<http://lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/students/>  
<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/procedures/>

It is your responsibility, as a member of this community, to be fully aware of the University's policies regarding academic dishonesty. When I detect academic dishonesty on any assignment you will receive a zero for that assignment. I also reserve the right to assign a grade of zero for the course as a whole. Furthermore, the matter may be turned over to the Dean of Student Academic Affairs for review with a recommendation of 'E' for the course.

## Grades

Essays will be graded on an A-E scale. Other grades will be assessed using a point system.

10% Essay 1

15% Essay 2

25% Essay 3

30% Essay 4

10% Workshop peer reviews

10% Participation / Other assignments

## Graded Essays

**Essay 1: Explanation/Description (3 pages)** You are a photocopier that converts pictures into words. Pick an image from flickr that captures your imagination and describe it for someone who can't see it.

**Essay 2: Argument from comparison (4 pages)** We've read about prescriptivist and descriptivist approaches to language. Compare the two viewpoints and use the comparison to support your argument in favor of one or the other.

**Essay 3: Analysis of an argument (5 pages)** In consultation with me you will pick an academic paper from a discipline that interests you. How does the author use language to achieve their<sup>1</sup> goals? Examine and evaluate the quality of the argument.

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<sup>1</sup>I am intentionally using 'they' as a gender-neutral singular pronoun here. Why on Earth would I do such a thing? Do you think this should be allowed in something like a course syllabus?

**Essay 4: Writing about a Standard (8 pages)** Early in the term you'll pick a 'Standard' to write about. This can be Standard English, the standard form of some foreign language you are studying, the standard of discourse required in your discipline (the sciences, for example, require a very different standard from that employed in a literature course), etc. You will choose a few articles about your chosen standard and/or interview a GSI to gather data for your paper.

You will turn in (at least) two drafts of each essay. Your workshop group (or the entire class) will comment on the first submitted draft. You will revise this draft and submit the second draft for a grade from me. Your second draft of each essay should be submitted with a one-page reflection on the revisions you made after the first draft. Failure to submit both pieces will automatically lower your grade on that essay by 1/3. All drafts will be submitted both online (ctools) and in hard copy by the beginning of class on the day they are due (see the policy on late work below).

You may revise the final, graded version of one essay and submit it a second time before the last day of class. If you choose to do this you must discuss your planned revisions with me in advance and attach a one page statement of your goals for the revision and justification of the changes made to the revised paper. Your grade for the revised essay, if higher, will replace the original grade.

## Workshops

Reading others' work carefully and critically helps you become both a better reader *and* a better writer. Throughout the semester you will be providing feedback on others' essays and revising your own writing based on the feedback of your peers.

**Two kinds of workshop:** We'll be workshoping in two different ways:

**Full Class Workshops (F.C.)** Two happy volunteers will have their papers read, commented on, and workshoped at each full class workshop. Never fear, everyone in class will get a chance to be on the hot seat.

**Small Group Workshops (S.G.)** You break up into 6 groups of 3 and each small group reviews each others' papers. The first two S.G. workshops will take place during class time, but **you must arrange time with your workshop group outside of class to workshop papers 3 & 4.**

**Before each Workshop:** Read the full class and your group members' drafts and prepare a Peer Review of each paper.

**At each workshop:** Bring two copies of each Peer Review to class: one for me and one for the author. Bring your marked-up drafts for the authors. Participate in the workshop. Failure to provide a peer review on time counts against your paper grade exactly as if your draft had been late.

**After each workshop:** Include a brief (one paragraph) cover letter with the final draft of your essay explaining how your final draft responds (or does not) to the feedback you received in the workshop.

## Other assignments

There will occasionally be other small writing assignments or exercises designed to draw on your nascent writing skills.

## Individual Conferences

Each student is required to sign-up for and attend a one-on-one conference with me to discuss your writing (in this or any class). A missed conference counts as two (2) unexcused absences and will not be rescheduled.

## Attendance

Knowledge, like any ability, is acquired better through small amounts of regular, daily practice than through infrequent bursts of strenuous effort. Come to class. Do the readings. Participate.

**1-2 absences** allowable for illness or emergencies

**3 or more absences** lose 5 points from final grade for each day missed!

If you have an extenuating circumstance, such as surgery or participation in varsity athletics, please communicate with me and we will decide together on how to coordinate your class responsibilities.

## Late Work

Unless stated otherwise, assignments are due by 8:10am on the stated due date. Late work will hurt you two ways: (1) you won't receive the feedback of your peers and (2) your

assignment will receive an immediate 5% reduction and an additional 5% reduction for every 24-hour period thereafter.

In case of a genuine emergency preventing you from submitting your assignment on time, please **speak with me in advance**. We can make arrangements for you to hand your assignment in late without penalty, **but I need to be made aware of the situation in advance**. In such cases, please notify me as soon as possible in advance of the deadline, and note that you must present proper documentation in advance to receive credit.

## Religious Holidays

In order for an absence to be excused, you must let me know at least **two weeks** prior to the holiday so that we can make arrangements for you not to miss material.

## Special Needs

Students with any special needs or disabilities (including learning disabilities) should inform me of their needs as soon as possible. Please give me any documentation during the first week of class so I can make proper accommodations.

## Tentative Schedule

Most of these readings are on ctools, some are in your Hacker style manual; these latter readings are marked with an (H). Please complete each assigned reading or writing assignment *prior to* the date it appears on.

Date	Topic(s)	Assignment(s) Due
W 3 Sept.	Introductions & Syllabus	
F 5 Sept.	Standard English <b>Paper 1 assigned</b>	READ: Curzan & Adams ch 2 (pp 1 - 11) WRITE: I believe grammar is ...
M 8 Sept.	Standard Written English	READ: Curzan & Adams ch 2 (pp 12 - 23 )
W 10 Sept.	Dictionary: Friend or Foe?	READ: How to use the OED. HW: problem 1
F 12 Sept.	Practice workshop <b>Paper 1 – workshop draft due</b>	READ: sample paper WRITE: peer review of sample paper
M 15 Sept.	Paper 1 workshop 1	READ: Papers 1 (1 & 2) WRITE: paper 1 (1 & 2) peer reviews
W 17 Sept.	Paper 1 workshop 2	READ: Papers 1 (3 & 4) WRITE: paper 1 (3 & 4) peer reviews
F 19 Sept.	Paper 1 workshops (s.g.)	WRITE: Papers 1 (group) WRITE: Paper 1 (group) peer reviews
M 22 Sept.	Comparison <b>Paper 2 assigned</b>	READ: Grammar (H) READ: Truss p.1
W 24 Sept.	Comparison	READ: Truss p.2
F 26 Sept.	Comparison <b>Paper 1 revision due</b>	READ: NYT on Truss
M 29 Sept	Punctuation	READ Punctuation (H)
W 1 Oct.	Punctuation 2	
F 3 Oct.	Preconceptions and Biases II	READ: Lippi-Green

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
M 6 Oct.	<b>Paper 2 draft due</b>	
W 8 Oct.	Paper 2 workshop 1	READ: Papers 2 (1 & 2) WRITE: paper 2 (1 & 2) peer reviews
F 10 Oct.	Paper 2 workshop 2	READ: Papers 2 (3 & 4) WRITE: paper 2 (3 & 4) peer reviews
M 13 Oct.	Paper 2 workshops (s.g.) <b>Paper 3 assigned</b>	WRITE: Papers 2 (group) WRITE: Paper 2 (group) peer reviews READ: TBA
W 15 Oct.	Dictionaries! <b>Paper 3</b> discussion	
F 17 Oct.	Library Tour (Meet at UgLi) <b>Paper 2 revision due @ 6:00pm Sunday</b>	
M 20 Oct.	Fall Study Break (no class)	
W 22 Oct.	<b>Paper 3 thesis discussions</b>	
F 24 Oct.	Argumentation	
M 27 Oct.	Argumentation	READ: Preston HW Pop & Soda
W 29 Oct.	Movie: Do You Speak American?	
F 31 Oct.	Happy Halloween <b>Paper 3 draft due</b>	READ: Poe

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
M 3 Nov.	Paper 3 workshop 1	READ: Papers 3 (1 & 2) WRITE: paper 3 (1 & 2) peer reviews
W 5 Nov.	Paper 3 workshop 2	READ: Papers 3 (3 & 4) WRITE: paper 3 (3 & 4) peer reviews
F 7 Nov.	Paper 3 workshops 3	WRITE: Papers 3 (5 & 6) WRITE: Papers 3 (5 & 6) peer reviews
M 10 Nov.	Argument Synthesis	READ: Paulos
W 12 Nov.	Argument Synthesis <b>Paper 4 assigned</b>	
F 14 Nov.	Argument Synthesis <b>Paper 3 revision due</b>	READ: loewen
M 17 Nov.	Audience	READ: Grice
W 19 Nov.	Homonyms with teeth!	READ: LanguageLog – cupertino essays
F 21 Nov.	Stylistics	READ: Curzan & Adams ch. 9 WRITE: spell checking exercise
M 24 Nov.	Stylistics	READ: O'Brian
W 26 Nov.	All generalizations are bad.	
F 28 Nov.	Thanksgiving Recess	
M 1 Dec.	Writing a Bluebook exam <b>Paper 4 draft due</b>	
W 3 Dec.	Paper 4 workshop 1	READ: Papers 4 (1 & 2) WRITE: Paper 4 (1 & 2) peer reviews
F 5 Dec.	Paper 4 workshop 2	READ: Papers 4 (3 & 4) WRITE: Paper 4 (3 & 4) peer reviews
M 8 Dec.	Overview & Review	
T 16 Dec.	<b>Paper 4 Revision Due by 10:00am</b>	