Engl 109: Introduction to Academic Writing

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30 – 12:50
Location: EV3 3408
Instructor: Dr. Frankie Condon
Email: fcondon@uwaterloo.ca
Telephone: 416-768-4253 (cell; texts accepted between 8AM and 8PM)
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 – 11:15 and by appointment

Course Description

English 109 is designed to get you comfortable writing in an academic context. You will learn about differences between forms of academic writing as well as more widely shared ideas about what makes writing good across disciplines. Together, we will study the choices great writers make as they write and the processes they engage in order to create their best work. We will study a variety of texts to learn more about how they were written and how to improve the writing each of you produces.

Across the disciplines as well as in nearly every profession the ability not only to communicate effectively, but also to collaborate is necessary to success. The best writers, we believe, talk with one another extensively about their writing at every stage of the composing process from the development of ideas through the final polishing of prose. The production of knowledge and, indeed, all learning are inherently social activities: writers at all levels of experience and ability learn from one another. For these reasons, much of your work in this course will involve different kinds of collaboration with your peers. You will learn to give useful feedback to your classmates, as well as to receive feedback and put it to use in the revision of your writing.

We believe that learning to write and read rhetorically takes place over time with meaningful support. In this course, you will receive feedback at multiple stages of the writing process and will have many opportunities to revise your work. You will collect all of your work from the earliest drafts to the most polished texts in a portfolio for the purposes of final evaluation.

Course Objectives

- To help you to think critically and communicate effectively
- To learn and practice a variety of strategies for inventing, drafting, and editing texts
- To learn and practice writing in a variety of academic genres
- To learn to read critically
- To learn to write persuasively by effectively employing elements of formal argumentation
- To help you give and receive useful feedback on writing for the purposes of revision
- To learn and practice communicating to a variety of academic audiences.

Required Texts

Frankfurt, Harry. “On Bullshit”
http://www.stoa.org.uk/topics/bullshit/pdf/on-bullshit.pdf

Grading

Participation and Attendance  20 Points

Note: Participation and attendance in this course are required and non-negotiable. To receive full marks for attendance you will need to come to every class. If you must miss a class for illness or for a family emergency, you will need to provide documentation. Every unexcused absence will result in a five-point deduction. If you miss four or more classes, you will continue to lose five points per absence from your final grade. To receive full marks for participation, you will need to participate fully in both large and small group discussions and in workshops. If you feel anxiety about formal or informal public speaking, please meet with me in the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Generally speaking, such accommodations may include weekly goals for increasing participation over the course of the term and alternative forms of participation. Failure to participate without having arranged for accommodations or without meeting the requirements of your arranged accommodation will result in deductions to your grade.

Reading Notebook  30 Points

Note: You should keep a reading notebook in which you document all course readings. For articles and book chapters, you will need to annotate (a skill I will begin to teach to you on the first day of class). For the Williams and Bizup book, you will complete assigned exercises at the end of each chapter in your reading notebook. Notebooks will be checked weekly in class.

Writing/Presentation Assignments

Dialogues  10 Points
Getting (and Giving) the Joke  15 Points
Bullshit Essay  25 Points
No Bullshit Presentation  20 points
Annotated Bibliography  10 Points
Percontation Essay  35 Points
Research Essay  35 Points

TOTAL POINTS  200

Each of you will begin this course with different areas of strength and challenge as writers. Therefore, each of you will each proceed through the course with different areas of focus for the purposes of learning, growth, and development as writers. There is no exact formula for producing good academic writing, no recipe for success that will work every time for every writer. Similarly, there is no exact formula for grading student writing where the work you produce is original (as, indeed, it must be). To account for these variations in experience, knowledge, and ability, therefore, you will each be asked to produce an author’s note for every assignment you write. You should treat these author’s notes as formal writing exercises, but also and more particularly as opportunities to dialogue with me about your particular needs and interests as a learning writer, as well as about your particular challenges and how you are going about addressing those through the course. Your author’s notes give you an opportunity to
describe me how you have gone about meeting the learning objectives for each assignment and your sense of how well you have accomplished those goals.

In accordance with University of Waterloo policy, your final grades will be assigned as a numeric value according to the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>83-100 [+above 95; -below 83]</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>72-78 [+above 78; -below 72]</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>62-68 [+above 68; -below 62]</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>52-58 [+above 58; -below 52]</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-38 [+above 46; -below 32]</td>
<td>F</td>
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Writing Assignment Descriptions

“Dialogues”

Write four short dialogues: one between you and a police officer, one between you and a potential employer, one between you and a child, and one with your best friend. In each scene you will be trying to explain why math (or some mathematical concept or fact) is important.

Your four dialogues can be quite short (roughly the length of a paragraph), but each should have a beginning, a middle, and an end and tell at least a relatively complete story.

Be sure to include an author’s note with your assignment when you turn it in for feedback from your instructor.

Tips for success

• Remember that you are speaking to very different people in each of these scenes. Adapt what you say and how you say it to the needs, interests, and abilities of the person to whom you are speaking.
• Invent a scene or story for each dialogue that explains why you are having this conversation. For example, perhaps you are talking with your little brother who is failing his math class and says he'll never use math in real life anyway.

Learning Goals for Assignment

• Recognition of the roles of audience and context in writerly decisions about what to say, what to leave unsaid, how to frame ideas. what words and structures to choose to communicate ideas effectively.
• Understanding of the impact of audience, context, and purpose on content, vocabulary, and structure.

“Getting (and Giving) the Joke”

Preparatory Assignment: Come to class prepared to tell your favorite math joke to the class. You will need to tell the joke and then explain to the class why the joke is funny. While many of your classmates will probably understand the joke before you explain it, some of us will not. Your job will be to use the joke to teach us the mathematical concept around which the joke is organized.

Writing Assignment: Write a short essay reflecting on your experience of trying to explain the joke you have told and the mathematical concept the joke plays upon to non-mathematicians. Consider in your essay what you need to know about your audience’s prior understanding in order to offer an effective explanation. Think about how you chose your terms and in what order you offered information to your audience so that they would also understand the joke. What was difficult, funny, interesting, or frustrating about the exercise? Reflect on how it feels to attempt communication with an audience who doesn’t share your knowledge. How did the ethos you established in explaining your joke affect the uptake of reasoning you were teaching to the rest of us?
Be sure to include an author’s note with your assignment when you turn it in for feedback from your instructor.

Tips for Success

- Consider how your sense of audience and your assessment of what they know already impact how you tell your joke as well as how you explain your joke.
- Consider how the order in which you offer the pieces of your explanation of the joke impact your audience’s ability to understand the concept at the heart of the joke.
- Consider how the differences in genre between the telling of your joke and your explanation of the joke. How do you work with time differently? How does your sense of “the opportune moment” change?

Learning Goal for Assignment

- Understanding of the elements of argument: plank, claims, inference, and warrant
- Understanding of the impact of variables (and ambiguities) such as audience, context, purpose to the ordering and delivery of those elements of argument
- Recognition of the importance of time and timing (exigence and kairos) in invention, arrangement, and warrant

On Bullshit

Preparatory Assignments: Read Harry Frankfurt’s essay, “On Bullshit.” http://www.stoa.org.uk/topics/bullshit/pdf/on-bullshit.pdf. Find and bring to class with you an example from a newspaper, website, blog or other source in which you think the writer is bullshitting as the practice is defined by Frankfurt.

Writing Assignment: Choose a current issue about which to write a short essay (2 pages) in which you attempt to deceive your readers by appearing to know more than you do about the topic, by privileging sincerity over reason, by employing fuzzy logic or bad math; write an essay about a current issue, in other words, in which you bullshit unabashedly, but convincingly using any compelling means at your disposal. Your primary objective in this essay is to disguise the fact and degree to which you are bullshitting your readers.

Schedule and attend a conference with your instructor to gather feedback on your essay.

Revise the essay based on the feedback you have received from your writing group members and your instructor focusing in particular on clarity, accessibility, and persuasiveness. Polish the final version focusing on word choice, sentence structure, effective transitions, and all copyediting issues.

Be sure to include an author’s note with your assignment when you turn it in for feedback from your instructor.

Tips for Success
• Think, write, and revise as well as you are able for every draft of your essay. Use the feedback you receive from your instructor and your group members to make your essay as compelling and polished as possible.

No Bullshit Presentation

Give a three-minute address to the class in which you present the issue about which you wrote in your Bullshit essay. This time, however, do the job right. Speak the truth as best you can discern it, building an honest, ethical, and compelling argument, however brief.

Learning Goals for Assignment

• Demonstrate the elements and strategies of effective argumentation
• Recognize strategies and tactics of rhetorical manipulation
• Develop ability to read critically

Annotated Bibliography

Preparatory Assignment: Read Penelope Maddy’s essay “Objectivity in Mathematics.” http://logic.harvard.edu/EFI_Maddy_ObjectivityInMathematics.pdf. Paraphrase the thesis of Maddy’s argument and summarize the argument itself.

Further Development: In class, compare your paraphrase and summary with those of your group members. Do you agree about the substance of her thesis? How does your representation of Maddy’s argument differ from those of your classmates? Work together to clarify and come to consensus about what Maddy is saying, why her argument might be important, to whom, and for what purposes.

Writing Assignment: Using your draft paraphrase and summary of Maddy’s thesis and argument as well as the model annotated bibliography provided on our course Learn site, write an entry for Maddy’s essay that you could include in an annotated bibliography of your own.

In class, workshop your annotated bibliography entry with your group members. Focus your feedback on clarity, organization, succinctness, and accessibility. Will your readers who are unfamiliar with Maddy’s essay gather enough information from your entry to understand what the essay is about and to judge whether or not reading the essay for themselves would be useful.

Revise your annotated bibliography entry based on the feedback you have received from your group members. Submit your final annotated bibliography entry using our course Learn site.

Be sure to include an author’s note with your assignment when you turn it in for feedback from your instructor.

Tips for success

• Here is a good source for learning more about annotated bibliographies: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/annotated-bibliography
Learning Goals for Assignment

- Translate complex or nuanced concepts or arguments into accessible prose.
- Demonstrate understanding of a writer’s ideas and argument by putting them into one’s own words fairly and accurately.
- Understanding of the formal expectations for annotated bibliographic entries.
- Ability to give and receive usable feedback; utilization of feedback for the purposes of effective revision.

Percontation Essay

A percontation is a question that cannot be answered simply with one word such as yes or no, right or wrong.

Draft a three to four page essay in which you explain to a non-mathematical audience how the study of mathematics might be useful in addressing a percontation. Try to use a concrete example. Consider the strategies used by Maddy in her essay such as analogy or the hypothetical researcher and experiment with those strategies in your draft.

Remember that drafting in the early stages serves the purposes of getting one’s thoughts on paper, exploring possibilities, nuances, possible objections, etc. Generally speaking, you will have an easier time cutting extraneous material having gotten everything you might possibly say onto the page than generating fill-in material having drafted too little with which to work through the revision process. Try to produce an initial draft of three pages or so at a minimum.

Further Development: In class workshop: Focus your feedback on one another’s’ drafts on sayback (“This is what I hear you saying…”), movies of the mind (“This is what I thought about as I read your draft…”) and problem posing (either “yes, but what about this…” or “what if your reader thinks X or doesn’t understand Y or wants to know Z?”).

It is likely at this stage that you will need to re-organize some or all of your draft and revisit your introduction and conclusion. You will find the exercise of “glossing” useful at this stage of your writing process. In the margins of you draft, beside each paragraph, write a few key words that summarize what the paragraph is about and what purpose it serves in your argument. Review your paragraph glossing and the feedback you have received from your group members. Use this information to revise your draft.

Schedule in individual conference with your instructor (and show up for the meeting). Bring your original draft, your notes for revision, as well as your revised draft with you to this conference. Following your conference, review your draft and make any substantive revisions based on the feedback you have received from your teacher.

Revise based on the feedback you have received and submit initial essay.

Final Draft Preparation: workshop your draft with your group members. In this session, focus your feedback on helping one another to revise based on instructor feedback offered for initial
essay as well as on sentence-level clarity and readability. Your objective will be to assist one another in producing finished, polished final versions of your short essay.

Complete the final revisions of your essay so that it is as finished and polished as you can make it. Write an author’s note detailing the process by which you arrived at this final essay. Discuss what you think works well in this last revision and where you felt most challenged as you worked through the writing process for this essay. Write a bit about what strengths you think are emerging for you as a writer and what challenges you think you need to continue to address as you continue to write in academic settings and beyond. Tell your me what kind of feedback you think will be most useful for you moving forward.

Organize your materials for this essay into a file. Use the Purdue OWL’s MLA formatting and style guide to assist you in preparing your file. https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Your file for this essay should include the following:

Cover page with your name, the course title, the date, and the title of your essay
Your final, polished essay
A Works Cited page
Your author’s note
Your essay drafts with notes from workshops and your conference with your instructor, as well as your notations from glossing, reviewing, and copyediting. Organize your drafts in the order in which they were produced and mark them (first draft, second draft, and so on for easy identification).

Tips for Success

- Start early! You will be far more successful if you give significant time and effort to the early stages of the writing process.
- Draft as much as you can as early as you can. Don’t think of an outline as a rough draft. Think of a real and extended draft (as long or longer than your final essay will be) as a rough draft. Use an outline to help you revise after you have produced this first extended draft.
- Give the best feedback you can (because you’ll get better feedback for your own work if you do). Use the feedback you receive to revise deeply and extensively over time.

Learning Goals for Assignment

- Ability to adapt content, organization, and style to audience
- Ability to utilize formal elements of argument to a persuasive essay
- Ability to incorporate research into a persuasive essay
- Ability to represent complex information in accessible prose
- Ability to give and receive usable feedback; utilization of feedback for the purposes of effective revision

Research Essay.

Writing Assignment: For this assignment, you will draft, workshop, revise, and polish an essay of five pages on one of the following topics:

a) Identify a problem in the study of mathematics about which experts argue. Define the problem and review the variety of perspectives argued by mathematicians in the field. Discuss the significance of this problem to the field as well as to your non-mathematician readers. You will need to use paraphrase, summary, and the incorporation of quotations as you have practiced them in previous writing assignments.

b) Identify a problem or question currently being addressed in the natural or social sciences. Following Hemper’s claim that mathematics is an indispensible tool for the validation and linguistic expression of empirical knowledge, write about how mathematics has or might be used to address this problem or question or to express what is known about the problem or question. Discuss the significance of the contribution of mathematics to the natural or social scientific field investigating this problem. Be sure that you write in ways that are accessible and understandable to your non-mathematician readers. You will need to use paraphrase, summary, and the incorporation of quotations as you have practiced them in previous writing assignments.

Step One: Schedule an individual conference with me to review your topic choice and brainstorm ideas for your essay.

Step Two: Identify, read, and review sources for your essay. You will need to find a minimum of three academic sources. These should be peer-reviewed articles published in scholarly journals whether print or online. In addition to your scholarly sources, you may choose one popular source such as a major newspaper or magazine. You may use additional sources such as government reports or white papers produced by legitimate (scholarly and research-based) public or private organizations. You will need to produce an annotated bibliographic entry for each source you use and include a final annotated bibliography with your final, polished essay for grading.

Step Three: Compose a draft of your essay that is as rich and full as you can make it. Use this first draft to get all of your ideas as well as your unanswered questions onto the page. Use this first draft to explore ideas, nuances, and complexities and to identify issues, problems, or questions you will need to address as you continue to compose your essay.

Step Four: Workshop I: feedback focused on sayback, movies of the mind, and problem posing

Step Five: Revise your draft based on the feedback you receive from your group and submit this initial essay for written feedback from me.

Step Six: Use my feedback to revise your essay. At this stage, your revisions will focus on organization and clarity of transitions from idea to idea, on the effectiveness of your introduction and the relevance of your conclusion. You will be working to ensure that your reasoning and the structure of your argument are compelling and that you are using accessible prose and structure to communicate your argument to your readers (that you are moving well from writer-based prose (getting it all out on the page) to reader-based prose (making your argument understandable, interesting, and convincing to your readers).

Step Seven: Workshop II: feedback focused on polishing and finishing your essay: on word choice and sentence structure, on copyediting for final revisions.
Step Eight: Complete the final revisions of your essay so that it is as finished and polished as you can make it. Write an author’s note detailing the process by which you arrived at this final essay. Discuss what you think works well in this last revision and where you felt most challenged as you worked through the writing process for this essay. Write a bit about what strengths you think are emerging for you as a writer and what challenges you think you need to continue to address as you continue to write in academic settings and beyond. Tell your instructor what kind of feedback you think will be most useful for you moving forward.

Organize your materials for this essay into a file. Use the Purdue OWL’s MLA formatting and style guide to assist you in preparing your file. https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Your file for this entry should include the following:

Cover page with your name, the course title, the date, and the title of your essay
Your final, polished essay
A Works Cited page
Your annotated bibliography
Your author’s note
Your essay drafts with notes from workshops and your conference with your instructor, as well as your notations from glossing, reviewing, and copyediting. Organize your drafts in the order in which they were produced and mark them (first draft, second draft, and so on for easy identification).

Tips for success

- Start early! You will be far more successful if you give significant time and effort to the early stages of the writing process.
- Draft as much as you can as early as you can. Don’t think of an outline as a rough draft. Think of a real and extended draft (as long or longer than your final essay will be) as a rough draft. Use an outline to help you revise after you have produced this first extended draft.
- Give the best feedback you can (because you'll get better feedback for your own work if you do). Use the feedback you receive to revise deeply and extensively over time.

Learning Goals for Assignment

- Ability to write from research
- Use of analysis, synthesis, and critique in academic writing.
- Ability to produce clear accessible academic prose (style, clarity, grace).
- Demonstrate movement from writer-based to reader-based prose in successive iterations of a written text.
- Ability to give and receive usable feedback; utilization of feedback for the purposes of effective revision
**Important Policy Information**

**Academic Integrity:** note on plagiarism: Although we will talk at length in class about writing from research and citation practices, take the time now to familiarize yourself with the summary of Policy #71. In order to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, consult “How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors”. Consult Academic Integrity at UW for more information. Visit this link to learn about the University of Waterloo’s expectations and policies regarding Academic Integrity.

**Accommodations:** The University of Waterloo has a long-standing commitment to support the participation and access to university programs, services, and facilities by persons with disabilities. Students who have a permanent disability as well as those with a temporary disability get AccessAbility Services. To register for services, you must provide documentation from a qualified professional to verify your disability. Please contact them at 519-888-4567 ext. 35082 or drop into Needles Hall 1132 to book an appointment to meet with an advisor to discuss their services and supports.

**Grievances:** In case that a decision affecting some aspect of a student’s university life has been unfair or unreasonable, they may have grounds for initiating a grievance according to Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** Familiarize yourself with “academic integrity” to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for your actions. Consult Policy 71 for all categories of offences and types of penalties.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals)http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm
## Course Calendar [Tentative]

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<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing in Progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 5</td>
<td>Williams, Part One</td>
<td>Dialogues</td>
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<td>Due [Thurs. Jan. 15]</td>
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<td>January 19</td>
<td>Williams Part Two, Lessons Three and Four</td>
<td>Getting (and Giving)</td>
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<td>the Joke [Presented Tuesday Jan. 20]</td>
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<td>Joke Essay Due [Thurs. Jan. 22]</td>
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<td>January 26</td>
<td>Frankfurt “On Bullshit”; Williams Part Two</td>
<td>Bullshit Essay</td>
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<td>Lessons Five and Six</td>
<td>Discussion; Workshop;</td>
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<td>Conferences</td>
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<td>February 2</td>
<td>Pitici: Maddy; Williams Part Three Lessons</td>
<td>Bullshit Essay Due [Tues. Feb 3]</td>
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<td>Seven and Eight</td>
<td>Annotated Bibliography Intro/Workshop</td>
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<td>Annotated Bibliography Due [Thurs. Feb. 5]</td>
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<td>February 9</td>
<td>Williams Part Four Lesson Nine</td>
<td>Percontation Essay Intro/Workshop</td>
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<td>February 16</td>
<td><strong>Reading Week</strong></td>
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<td>February 23</td>
<td>Pitici TBA; Williams Part Four Lessons Ten</td>
<td>Conferences</td>
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<td>and Eleven</td>
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<td>March 2</td>
<td>Pitici TBA; Williams Part Five Lesson Twelve</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
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<td>March 9</td>
<td>Pitici TBA</td>
<td>Research Essay Intro/Workshops</td>
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<td>April 6</td>
<td><strong>Lectures End</strong></td>
<td>Final Essays Due: Percontation File; Research File</td>
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