Introduction to Academic Writing

Course Description

According to the University of Waterloo Undergraduate Calendar, ENGL 109 “will explore a variety of issues in academic writing such as style, argument, and the presentation of information. Frequent written exercises will be required.”

This section of ENGL 109 will be run as a writing workshop; it will increase your comfort with, and ability in, academic writing; to this end, you will do lots of writing, both during and after class. You will boost your academic writing abilities through intensive practice in group work, peer review, in-class activities (such as freewriting), and the scaffolded revision of assignments. You will also develop proficiency in how written communication works through such concepts as grammar and structure, genre and form, and rhetoric and context.

The ability to communicate effectively in writing is essential for a life well-lived. It is a way to get to know yourself, invent yourself, and express yourself. It is a necessary prerequisite for success at university—and for success in almost every profession and walk of life. Effective writing is not simply putting ideas onto paper. Effective writing is also not just grammatical and well-organized writing, or even well-informed or factual writing, as important as those elements are. Rather, effective writing is persuasive writing. Persuasive writing considers such factors as your audience, the context in which you are writing, the genre in which you are writing, and even the version of yourself that you present to your audience through your writing. Good writing is, therefore (as we will discuss), rhetorically-informed writing.

Good writing almost never arises in a vacuum or by way of a lightening flash of romantic inspiration. Rather, good writing is an art and takes shape as a craft within specific contexts defined by audience, genre, and social convention. It is part of a conversation with yourself, with others, and with the past (that is, with other writers and pre-existing genres). As a fundamentally contextual and collaborative act, good writing thrives on feedback and revision.

In this course, you will receive peer and instructor feedback at multiple stages of the writing process and you will have many opportunities to revise your work. By the end of term you will collect some of your earlier assignments, from the earliest drafts to the most polished revisions, into a portfolio for another, final revision and 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

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Logistics

Office: Hagey Hall 267
Email: easton@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 519-888-4567, ext. 33359
Office hours: 1:00-2:00 pm Wednesday, 2:30-3:30 pm Thursday, or by appointment

Required Texts


Required Supplies (for class meetings)

Clipboard (or similar), a supply of 8 ½” x 11” paper for writing on in class, and a pen; a stapler is optional

Assignments

Assignments for this course will be worth a total of 200 points; the total points you earn in this class will be divided in half to calculate your final grade for the course. Note that larger assignments will involve various elements and stages, such as preliminary exercises, freewrites, drafts, revisions, peer review, and self-assessment. Students must word-process in MLA format as laid out in Ruszkiewicz and Dolmage and print out all assignments done at home in advance of class and bring them to class as hard copies, whether for peer review (three copies), revision of draft work (three copies), or final submission (one copy + all previous drafts). In-class writing activities must be done with pen on regular size (8.5”x11”) paper.
Course assignments: Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class discussions, exercises, short in-class writing assignments, and peer-reviewing activities (20 points); your best two out of three short writing assignments (5 points each; 10 points total); argument to advance a thesis (30 points); research report (40 points); annotated bibliography (10 points); literary analysis (40 points); final portfolio (50 points).*

*Note: see the “Syllabus” for a schedule of assignments. Detailed schedules, readings, and expectations for assignments will be provided, with instructions, in advance of your work on each one. There is no final examination for this class.

Course Expectations

Participation and Attendance:

Participation and attendance are required and non-negotiable for all class meetings of this course.

To receive full marks for attendance in this course, 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 formal documentation such as that provided via Health Services or Counselling Services. Every unexcused absence from a class meeting will result in a five-point deduction from your participation score. If you miss more than four classes, you will continue to lose five points per absence from your final points total.

To receive full marks for participation in this course, you will need to engage actively in both large and small group discussions and in peer review activities. Keep in mind that in most workplaces, as well as in academic contexts, it is commonplace to work in teams to craft communications or to speak to large or small groups on various matters--so these academic activities in class are relevant to your success right now on co-op terms as well as to your future working life. Nevertheless, if you feel anxiety about formal or informal public speaking, please meet with your instructor in the first week of classes 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.

Electronic Devices

Use of electronic devices is not normally permitted at class meetings in this course. Phones and tablets must be turned off and stowed, and laptops must remain closed. Any accommodations for the regular use of electronic devices in this class must be requested in the first week of classes.

Late Policy
Barring a serious medical reason or family emergency that is formally documented with a letter or note from Health or Counselling Services, all late assignments will be penalized 5 points for the first day, and 2 points for every day thereafter, including weekend days and holidays, and uncompleted or missed assignments will be graded 0 points.

Paper Format

Papers must follow the paper format set out in the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed. (as laid out in Ruszkiewicz and Dolmage), be typed, double-spaced, printed out on one side of the page, and fastened with a staple (DO NOT use plastic report folders or other fasteners or covers); please do not use right justification. Papers must follow the format for paper presentation, quotations, and references set out in the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed. as laid out in Ruszkiewicz and Dolmage.

Note: Please keep a copy of every assignment you submit to me, and NEVER hand a paper or any other assignment in by sliding it under (or sticking it to) my office door.

Plagiarism

Students must follow at all times both University and Faculty regulations on plagiarism (see especially Policy 71). Note, in particular, that all work apart from group assignments and peer review edits and guidance must be your own, and the words and ideas of others must appear within your work inside quotation marks and with complete references in foot- or endnotes. Demonstrated instances of plagiarism in your work for this course will be subject to academic penalties. (See below for more information on academic integrity.)

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Additional Information

**Writing and Communication Centre**

The Writing and Communication Centre works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and Communication specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or you can drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see
drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/wcc. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

Please note that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you.

**Academic Integrity and Discipline**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the Office of Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

**Grievances and Appeals**

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**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.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

**Note for students with disabilities:** AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Mental Health Support**
All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

**On Campus**

- **Counselling Services**: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- **Health Services Emergency service**: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

**Off campus, 24/7**

- **Good2Talk**: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- **Grand River Hospital**: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 ext. 6880
- **Here 24/7**: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME**: set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources (PDF)](#)
Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the [CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory (PDF)](#).

**Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo**

[Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour](#) states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), “The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, 'academic freedom' refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in
the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.” This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.