ENGL 109: Intro. To Academic Writing

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Course description:

The course will explore a variety of issues in academic writing such as style, argument, and the presentation of information. We are going to be writing, like, frequently and nearly constantly, and about everything. Let me say that again: you will be writing in class every day, and some of what you write, you will hand in, or use to work on later for something else to hand in.

This course is focused around the theme of power and knowledge, so: truth, facts, evidence, argument, point of view, and persuasion. We are going to be reading and writing particularly about how truth claims are made, how evidence is used to support these claims, and how arguments are made persuasive with technique as well as facts.

Academic writing, like all writing, takes place in contexts where expertise is more or less valued, facts are more or less debatable, and where being knowledgeable can make you powerful, but where sometimes (maybe more often than we would hope) being powerful means you get to decide what constitutes knowledge.

Course learning outcomes:

The design of the content and schedule of the course is determined by our goals of considering how writing creates or obscures “power” and/or “knowledge,” and of becoming stronger academic writers in a university setting. More formally, the course aims to:

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

This course is reading intensive, writing intensive, and participation intensive: I expect you to do the readings, show up, and take part.
Course meeting times

The course meets twice weekly, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30-12:50, in Environment 3, room 3406 (EV 3 3406 in Quest-speak).

Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you have about the class, the readings, or the assignments. I will be in my office during the hours noted, and I’m always very happy to have you drop by during these times, or by appointment at other times. Beyond office hours, contact is probably best initiated via email.

This class is an inclusive space

The university mandates that I say this: “Note for Students with Disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office (AS), 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 the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.”

But what is really important is this: I strive to make my classes accessible to whatever student happens to cross the threshold. Everyone has a right to the full experience of the university education they have earned by admission and/or tuition payment. Night owls, English learners, introverts, rebels, loud-talkers, assault survivors, grieving students, anime fans but only like the subs and not the dubs, injured students, disabled students, people with dial up internet, people who wear sunglasses indoors because it’s, like, too much. If there’s something you need to help you succeed, lemme know. If something in this document is freaking you out, let’s talk. If you’re registered with AccessAbility Services (man, that’s a LOT of paperwork to fill out!!!!) you can for sure have them send me whatever. Or talk with me. Me, I’m autistic with a VERY LARGE SIDE ORDER of ADHD, so, yeah. Let me help you out here.

Technology Policies

Email policy: Email is fast, but it is not instant. I will read your emails within 1 business day, and I will respond within 2 business days. I’m trying to limit email so I have more moral authority to kick my 13-year-old off her iPhone. We all need boundaries! I do not address major questions of substance (“Can you explain why I got that grade on my paper, because my mom thinks I’m a genius?”) in emails, but will use it to make appointments with you (“Can you meet with me on Wednesday to discuss your feedback on my paper?”).
Email policy, part 2: Email is a professional communication medium. Be professional in your communications: use your university email, or at least not one called “pornstar69@hotmail.com” because a) REALLY?? And b) it’ll probably get stuck in my spam filter. Make sure your address includes your name. Write respectfully.

Device policy: Mostly, we talk and write about stuff. With each other. In real time and face to face. There is almost no lecturing in this course, but lots of in-class exercises, group work, and thinking-out-loud. Bring your laptop: we write online, alone and in groups, and sometimes collectively. We have lids-up time (use the computer), but also lids-down time (no computer). We have a definite no farting-around-during-class policy.

Required and Recommended texts

The following text is required for the course. Bring it to class. It is available for purchase at the W Store in South Campus Hall. Or order it for $2 cheaper from Amazon.


We have a course website: it is available through Learn. You must access this site regularly: this is where links to readings not in the textbooks are located, as well as copies of all the handouts. Group work will go here. Grades live here.

Assignments and Mark Distribution

The following are the graded components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Explanation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>October 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact-Check Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Argument</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>November 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>December 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed handouts describe what is expected of you from each assignment; please read these carefully (they’re also online!) and refer to them as you complete the assignments.

Each assignment has a series of due dates associated with it: here, we engage in process-based writing, and each stage of the process, being essential, to the production of good writing, counts.
Participation, Absence, and Late Policy

Attendance is vital to your success in this course. If you choose not to attend, you will be missing in-class exercises upon which some of your grades will depend. Participation is 20% of your course grade! And it’s the easiest grade to get! Just come to class and try a little! There are no ‘makeups’ for this work. You get one “freebie” absence, and any other must be excused.

Participation grades are assessed according to the following criteria: attends; stays awake during class; does not engage in online shopping / shitposting / meme generation / software development during class; participates fully in group and class discussion; collaborates meaningfully in the production of shared documents and resources for class; shows evidence of having read assigned material; listens and speaks respectfully to others.

Assignments are due as noted on the assignment sheets and on the Learn calendar; unless prior arrangements are made late assignments will lose 10% per day late, counting weekends. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted without documentation or explanation.

Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of this class—instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

You will:
- Know the university policies that govern your behaviour
- Attend all scheduled classes
- Arrive with assigned reading and writing completed, and with appropriate materials in hand
- Participate actively in your own learning, while respecting the rights of others to learn as well: this means active listening as well as active speaking
- Give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

I will:
- Adhere to the university policies that govern my behaviour
- Attend all scheduled classes
- Make myself available for consultation in person and over email
- Return assignments within 2 weeks
- Provide helpful and respectful feedback on your work

On academic dishonesty: it is a serious offense to appropriate the intellectual labour of another to yourself. Plagiarism consists of using someone else’s words or ideas
without proper attribution. I expect that the work you submit in this course will be the product of your own labour, and that your research sources will be scrupulously documented. If you have any concerns or questions about appropriate practice, you are sincerely encouraged to come discuss this with me—I would really like to help.

*On academic dishonesty and intellectual property:* be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of the instructor—me. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials are used to enhance your educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. Also, please alert me if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, particularly online.

**Academic Integrity**

- In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity Webpage (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) for more information.

**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 (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**

- A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing academic offenses and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71). For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).
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 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).
Schedule

Note: Listed below are the textbook readings and all the assignment due dates. There will be readings, also, that are only available on LEARN—these are updated weekly, so you will need to check the website very regularly to make sure you are reading all the assigned primary materials (basically, the stuff we are going to fight about in class.)

5 September:
- **Read:** (the syllabus, probs after class)
- **Process writing:** What people don’t understand about this thing I know a lot about that I do / make / read / consume on the Internet
- **Homework:** Read the syllabus: identify the one piece of information that seems the most important to you, write it down, and explain briefly why you think it’s the most important (to you, or in general). Email it to me through LEARN by Monday, Sept 9, 8am. In that same email, send me your writing self-assessment we worked on in class.

Internet Explanation

10 September:
- **Read:** Ch 2 Defining Genres and Purpose, 3 Claiming Topics ,4 Imagining Audiences (pp 12-25)
- **Read:** Eddo Stern, “Warcrack for the Hordes: Why Warcraft Owns the World” (pp 661-669)
- **Process writing:** Audience and purpose? What is the difference between what I know and what I want my audience to know? What do I need to explain?

12 September:
- **Read:** Ch 9 Explanations (pp 65-88)
- **Read:** Ch 33 Levels of Style (pp 368-374)
- **Process writing:** How can I be persuasive and convincing? What extra material might I need to cite or provide? How can I organize the whole thing to work best?

17 September:
- **Read:** Ch 34 Clear and Vigorous Writing, Ch 35 Inclusive Writing (pp 375-386)
- **Read:** Ch 38 Memorable Openings and Closings, Ch 39 Informative Titles (pp 395-401)
- **Due:** One page of Internet Explanation, for discussion and revision

19 September:
• **Read:** Ch 42 Designing Print and Online Documents (pp 417-425)
• **Read:** Ch 32 Overcoming Writer’s Block (pp 362-365)
• **Read:** Matt Daniels, “Where New Slang Comes From” (pp 648-660)
• **Workshop:** How to Use Microsoft Word
• **Process writing:** let’s design some documents semantically as well as visually!

24 September:
• **Read:** Ch 36 Purposeful Paragraphs, Ch 37 Strategic Transitions (pp 387-394)
• **Process writing:** Rewrite a paragraph from your Internet Explanation draft. Rewrite some transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. Share this with others.

26 September:
• **Read:** Ch 30 Revising, Editing and Proofreading, Ch 31 Peer Editing (pp 350-359)
• **Due:** Full draft of Internet Explanation, for workshopping

Fact-Check Report

1 October:
• **Due:** Final copy of Internet Explanation, to hand in
• **Read:** Web Literacy Part 1: Four Strategies and a Habit
• **Read:** Ch 25 Smart Reading, Ch 26 Critical Thinking
• **Process writing:** Brainstorm questionable internet “facts”

3 October:
• **Read:** Ch 8 Reports (pp 38-52)
• **Read:** Web Literacy Part 2: Look for Previous Work
• **Read:** Instagram hoax material (short articles on Learn)
• **Process writing:** Choose an issue for Fact-Check Report; begin research

8 October:
• **Read:** Web Literacy Part 3: Go Upstream
• **Read:** Ch 17 Annotated Bibliographies (pp 251-257)
• **Process writing:** Exercises from Web Literacy guide; further research on fact check topic: annotate bad sources and annotate good sources.

10 October:
• **Read:** Web Literacy Part 4: Read Laterally (first half)
• **Due:** Annotated list of 8 sources for Fact-Check Report
• **Process writing:** begin drafting text of Fact-Check Report
22 October:
- **Read**: Web Literacy Part 4: Read Laterally (second half)
- **Due**: Full draft of Fact-Check Report, *for workshopping*

**Evidence-based Argument**

24 October:
- **Read**: Ch 10 Arguments (only pp 89-99)
- **Read**: Ryan Young, “Self-Driving Cars: A Reality Check”
- **Read**: Paul Argenti, “Corporate Ethics in the Era of Millenials” (pp 672-676)
- **Read**: Daniel Engber, “Glutton Intolerance” (pp 686-691)
- **Process writing**: Considering what we want to argue for or against, and assessing what might make a good topic

29 October RESEARCH WORKSHOP SUPER IMPORTANT:
- **Read**: Ch 43 Beginning Research, Ch 45 Finding Print and Online Resources, Ch 46 Evaluating Sources, Ch 48 Annotating Sources (about 20 pages total)
- **Due**: Final copy of Fact-Check Report, *to hand in*
- **Process writing**: Topic for and response to argument that needs evidence

31 October:
- **Read**: Ch 10 Arguments (pp 99-106)
- **(Also something I haven’t figure out yet … stay tuned)**

5 November:
- **Read**: Ch 27 Shaping a Thesis, Ch 28 Strategies of Development, Ch 29 Outlining (pp 333-349)
- **Process writing**: Generating ideas about a thesis, an outline, an organization, a research plan, a revision plan, a binge-watch plan, possibly a crying and melodramatic Snapchat plan.

7 November:
- **Read**: Ch 49 Summarizing Sources, Ch 50 Paraphrasing Sources, Ch 51 Incorporating Sources into Your Work (pp
- **Due**: Annotated list of 8 sources for Evidence-Based Argument, *for workshopping*

12 November:
- **Due**: Full draft of Evidence-Based Argument, *for workshopping*
Self-Evaluation

14 November:
- **Read:** Ch 15 Essays (pp 221-241), Ch 23 Personal Statements (pp 304-310)
- **Due:** Final copy of Evidence-Based Argument, *to hand in*

19 November:
- **Read:** Online readings on Dunning-Kruger Effect
- **Process writing:** Brainstorm for Self-Evaluation, dig through accumulated notes and journal entries to remind yourself what happened and how you felt and what you learned

21 November:
- **Read:** Lynda Barry, "Lost and Found" (pp 808-814)

26 November:
- **Read:** Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Acting French" (pp 818-829)
- **Due:** Draft of introduction to Self-Evaluation, *for workshopping*

28 November:
- **Process writing:** work period on Self-Evaluation

3 December:
- **Due:** Final copy of Self-Evaluation, *to hand in.*