Intro to Academic Writing

ENGL 109, Sect. 016
Tues/Thurs 4:00pm - 5:20pm
EV3 3406

Instructor Info

Instructor: Philip Miletic
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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1:-3:30 pm, or meet by appointment
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Course Description

The purpose of English 109 is to get you comfortable writing in an academic context, and to develop your skills as a writer. This course will help you to think critically and creatively, and to communicate your ideas effectively. You will learn and practice the various strategies for inventing, drafting, and editing texts in different genres for different audiences. More importantly, the course’s smaller and larger assignments will help you find your “voice” within each of these genres of writing; that is, learning to write academically is not learning how to write like everybody else, but rather how to craft a professional yet personally distinct style within the conventions of academic genres.

This Course is divided into three units:

Creative Approaches to Understanding Writing

In this unit, we will use creative approaches to understand the fundamentals of writing skills. We will learn about narrative, style, audience, and figurative language, and why these are crucial for academic writing. This unit will help you confidently build your personal style and get your comfortable writing on a weekly basis.

Rhetorical Analysis

After we have developed core competencies in writing skills, we will then learn how to perform rhetorical analysis. Rhetoric is the “art of persuasion,” and so we will be learning how certain people use rhetorical strategies to persuade others on a particularly issue. For this unit, we will focus on how tech companies use rhetoric in their ads and in the design of their products.

Digital Media Research

Building off of the Rhetorical Analysis unit, we will conclude our course with learning how to do research on digital media. We will learn about the rhetoric of digital media use, such as selfies, and how each
digital medium shapes how we use that medium. And we will learn the basics of doing academic research and how to write a research paper.

**Course learning outcomes:**

The design of the content and schedule of the course is determined by our goals of scholarly engagement with the idea and practice of ‘the superhero’ and of becoming stronger academic writers in a university setting.

**Knowledge—by the end of the course you should be able to:**

- **Identify** the basic strategies of academic writing and research
- **Write** clear and persuasive short academic papers, supported by evidence
- **Discuss** creative strategies for writing, the rhetoric of media, and the affordances and constraints of technology.

**Application—over the course of the term you will:**

- **Take notes** to understand, remember, and apply new ideas to your writing
- **Interpret** texts using scholarly methods of analysis
- **Frame** persuasive arguments in writing

**Integration—this course encourages you to:**

- **Develop** a clear, concise, and scholarly ‘voice’
- **Write** more professionally: conceive, research, draft, edit, and proofread your work
- **Connect** our reading and writing strategies to the larger project of your degree

**Technology Policies**

**Email policy, pt 1:** Do not expect me to respond to your email instantaneously. Give me 24h to respond on weekdays and 48h to respond on weekends.

**Email policy, pt 2:** Please be professional in your email and use your waterloo email. Use a clear subject heading, begin with a salutation (“Dear Phil”), and end with a sign off (Best, [student name]). This makes me take your email seriously, and I know right away who the email is from and what the email will be about.

**Accessibility and Accommodations:**

In our class environment, we will be mindful of the reality that everyone learns differently. If you have any concerns about accessing course content, participating in class discussions, or
accommodating your learning style, please let me know. You can also arrange for formal accommodations with AccessAbility Services by registering at the beginning of each academic term. Their office is located in room 1401 of Needles Hall. (Phone: 519-888-4567 ext. 35082; Web: https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services; Email: access@uwaterloo.ca)

**Required Text**

*How to Write Anything (with readings) 3rd ed with 2016 MLA update* by John Ruszkiewicz and Jay Dolmage

**Assignments Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Exercises</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td><em>See Description</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td><em>See Description</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1 Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Oct 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2 Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Nov 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 3 Assignment Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Nov 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Nov 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Media Research Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Dec 6</td>
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Assignment Descriptions

Weekly Exercises (20%)

Weekly Exercises are short writing prompts or in-class activities that you are to do where noted on the syllabus. Most of the exercises require you do the work outside of class, but some exercises (where noted) are in-class and don’t require prep.

These assignments will be completion marks, and you will receive some feedback on your writing. If you miss class for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to contact me to discuss the missed exercise.

Peer Review (10%)

Peer review is separate from weekly exercises. Peer Review days (noted on the syllabus) require you to bring an outline or draft, as specified in the syllabus, to receive feedback from your peers. To receive a full mark for each Peer Review day, you must also give quality feedback to your peers (that is, say more than “good” or “needs improvement.”). Peer review instructions will be provided in class during these sessions to ensure quality feedback.

Unit 1 Assignment: Creative Personal Narrative (10%)

In this assignment, you are to creatively write a personal prose narrative that is a full 2 to 3 pages long, double spaced. You have the choice of writing a literacy narrative, a narrative about your relationship to a pop cultural item, a reflection, or a memoir. You will be marked on the organization, structure, and writing of your narrative.

Further details and rubric will be handed out in the second week of classes.

Unit 2 Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis Paper (15%)

In this assignment, you must write a rhetorical analysis of an advertisement that we have looked at in class or an advertisement of your choice. If you select an ad that we have not looked at in class, the only condition is that the ad must be made by a tech company (such as Apple or Microsoft or Samsung, etc). You will be marked on the organization, structure, and writing of your paper, as well as the quality of your analysis.

The assignment must be a full 2-3 pages, double spaced, and in MLA format. Further details and rubric will be handed out in the first week of the second unit.

Unit 3 Assignments: Digital Media Research Project (20%)

The final project can either be a research essay or a creative essay on a topic related to Digital Media. You may choose I topic that we discuss in class during the third unit or you may choose
a topic of your own. Each of these options require 2-3 secondary academic sources that are not your textbook to support your arguments.

The **research essay** requires you to write a full 4-5 pages double spaced on a particular research topic of your choice that is related to the Unit. The research essay can be written with one other partner, but make sure that the paper will have equal contributions. *Students who fail to contribute will receive zero.* The essay must be formatted in MLA and in 12-pt Times New Roman or Calibri font.

The **creative essay** is similar to the research essay in the sense that you must construct an argument on a particular research topic of your choice that is related to the unit. However, instead of a handwritten essay, you can make a video essay, a podcast essay, or a creative format that you propose to me. Since there is no page length for these formats, your submission must be 8-12 minutes. You may do this project with another partner, *but students who fail to contribute will receive zero.* Secondary sources must still be included to support your arguments. With your creative essay, you must submit a Work Cited page in MLA format.

Throughout the final unit, there will be accumulative assignments that train you in developing your research skills and building skills in critically analyzing digital media. These three assignments are the **Proposal (Due Nov 15 at the beginning of class)** and the **Annotated Bibliography (Due Nov 23 via Learn Dropbox).** The Digital Media Research Project is **due Dec 6 Via Learn Dropbox**

Please see the separate instruction handout for further details on this assignment and its accumulative assignments.

**Schedule**

*Note: all readings must be completed before the assigned date. You should be coming into class prepared, having read the material on that date*

**Week 1: Introductions**

September 6: Introducing ourselves/Course overview

**Week 2: Narrative**

Theme: Responding to Poetry

Sept 11: **Read:** *How to...* Chapter 1 and “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan  
Sept 13: **Exercise:** Select a poem (available on Learn) that speaks to you. In class, you will be given time to write a response to that poem.
Week 3: Style
Theme: Academic writing is not impersonal

Sept 18: Read: How to... Chapter 32, 33, & 34, and “Zombie Spaceship Wasteland” by Patton Oswalt
Sept 20: Exercise: Select a photo from your own personal collection. In class, you will write a narrative about that photo. You are advised to pick a photo that might best reflect your writing style or a writing style you wish to write.

Week 4
Topic: Conceiving a Project and Peer Review

Sept 25: Read: Chapter 23 (Writer’s Block), Chapter 25 (Strategies), and “Mint Snowball” by Naomi Shihab Nye
Sept 27: Peer Review: By now, you should have an idea for your Unit 1 Assignment. Share an outline with a peer and give each other feedback.

Unit 2: Rhetorical Analysis

Week 5
Topic: Apple & Rhetorical Appeals (Pathos, Ethos, Logos)

Oct 2: Read: Chapter 8
Oct 4: In-Class Exercise: We will be looking at a series of ads in class. No prep is necessary other than having read the chapter for this week.
Oct 5: Unit 1 assignment due via Learn Dropbox

Week 6
Topic: Samsung & Critically Analyzing Targeted Audiences in the Rhetoric of Ads

Oct 9: STUDY BREAK, NO CLASS
Oct 11: Read: Chapters 20 & 21 and “The Other Car” by Stanley Fish
   Exercise: Write a 250 word response to Fish’s “The Other Car.” What did you find interesting about the article? What questions did this article raise for you regarding rhetorical analysis? Could you provide a counter-argument?

Week 7
Topic: Drafting your Thesis and Outlining your Paper

Oct 16: Read: Chapter 24 (Thesis) and Chapter 27 (Outlines)
Oct 18: Exercise: Brainstorming Activity: Be prepared to brainstorm ideas for your Rhetorical Analysis Paper.
Week 8
Topic: Introducing Rhetorical and Critical Analysis papers

Oct 23: **Read:** Chapter 28 (Paragraphs), Chapter 29 (Transitions), and Chapter 30 (Introductions and Conclusions)
Oct 25: **Peer Review Activity:** Bring in a draft of your rhetorical analysis paper. The draft should be 2 pages long, and should also include an outline so your peer reviewer can know what else will be argued in the paper.

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**Unit 3: Digital Media Research**

Week 9
Topic: The Rhetoric of Digital Media

Oct 30: **Read:** Chapter 48 (Understanding Digital Media)
Nov 1: **Exercise:** Write a short response (approx. 250 words) on why or why not you think digital media alternatives to writing (like podcasts or video) can be considered “academic writing.” We’ll discuss your answers in class.

Nov 2: **Due:** Unit 2 Assignment via Learn Dropbox

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Week 10
Topic: The Rhetoric of Selfies and Hashtags

Nov 6 **Read:** Morrison, “Selfies.” (available via Learn)
Nov 8: **In-class Exercise:** Write a reflection (approx. 250 words) on the rhetorical significance of the selfies within the hashtags that I give to your group.

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Week 11
Topic: Doing Research

Nov 13: **Read:** Chapter 37 (Beginning Your Research), Chapter 38 (Finding Print and Online Sources), and Chapter 40 (Evaluating Sources)
Nov 15: **Due:** Proposal. In class, you will exchange proposals and give feedback
    **In-class Exercise:** With the submission of the proposal, you should have an idea of what you want to research. And if you don’t, just select a topic related to this unit that interests you. In class, we will have a researching exercise on the topic you have chosen.

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Week 12
Topic: Working with Sources & Proposals

Nov 20: **Read:** Chapter 42 (Summarizing Sources), Chapter 43 (Paraphrasing Sources), Chapter 44: Incorporating Sources into Your Work
Nov 22: **Exercise**: Select an academic source from you research that you have done so far for your Annotated Bibliography. In class, summarize the source’s argument, paraphrase an argument, and integrate a quote from that source into a sentence of your own.

Nov 23: **Due**: Annotated Bibliography via Learn Dropbox

**Week 13: Fond Farewells**

Nov 27: **Peer Review**: bring in a draft of your final essay. Should be approx. 2-4 pages.*

Nov 29: **Peer Review**: bring in a draft of your final essay, updated from the last peer review session.

* If you are doing a creative essay, bring in “draft” or draft notes and outline for your project.

**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:

- attend all scheduled classes
- arrive prepared: 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.
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. There are no ‘makeups’ for this work.

Assignments are due as noted on the assignment sheets; unless prior arrangements are made late assignments will lose 5% per day late, counting weekends. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted without documentation or explanation.