ENGL-109: Introduction to Academic Writing  
Fall 2018  

Lecture: Tuesdays, 4:00 PM – 5:20 PM, EV3 3408  
Seminar: Thursdays, 4:00 PM – 5:20 PM, EV3 3408  
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Office: PAS 2215  
Office Hours: 3:00 – 4:00PM, Tuesdays  

Course Description:  

Hello, and welcome to English 109!  

This course is about learning to write on an academic level, in other words, for your years of university yet to come. As you progress in your careers both here and in your working years to follow, you will discover that you will need to write in many different ways in order to succeed in your various industries. This course will hopefully give you a primer for the skills you will need to meet these challenges.  

This course has two primary objectives:  

1) To develop your skills in the elementary forms of writing that will be required of you in your academic career, including narrative, analytical, and rhetorical-argumentative essays. These are not simple forms, but rather foundational kinds of writing which you will use in any number of different formats, whether you are presenting your analysis of a situation, project, event, product, etc., or narrating a significant series of events for others. You will also have your skills in argumentation refined, and explore the broad array of applications for this skill.  

2) To begin to understand the foundational role language and communication plays in your lives. While you no doubt have some idea of this already, my colleagues and I accept a basic philosophical premise: the world does not simply contain language as a tool we use to work with each other in the world, but rather the very ontological existence of objects in the world depends upon language. Not only that, but the way in which language is used differently not only changes our outlook on various things, but changes the nature of the thing itself by virtue of changing how it is framed. We accept that things only exist as we apprehend them, whether that is how we place value on individualism or how we ascribe worth to abstract and platonic ideals towards which we strive for objects like a car or a mountain to embody. Our realities change as language changes, and without certain ontological-linguistic architectures, whole parts of the world may indeed fall apart.  

I don’t wish to be too dramatic (he said, after much melodramatic soliloquizing), but the work you do in this last respect has a critical bearing on you and how you perform in this class. The lesson is, take nothing in your writing for granted. You can assume very little about your audience and what they already know, and you can assume nothing about how they assess their own reality. Be aware of your language. Always interrogate your own assumptions. Those around you may use the same language and may have been raised in similar cultures with similar values, but ultimately you have no way of knowing to what degree the way you see things overlaps with that of those around you. This has been an
incredibly valuable lesson to me, and I believe it has improved my writing and my grasp of reality as a whole. In my experience it increases clarity and narrows your claims so that they follow more and more directly from the evidence you have presented, which is ultimately the aim of good academic writing. If I can teach you nothing more about how language functions in your daily life, this is what I hope you will take away from our work together this term.

Do your best in the assignments you submit, maintain open lines of communication both with me and with your classmates, and you will do just fine! This may all seem daunting, and sometimes misleadingly low-energy or simple, but it is challenging and complex. I am here to help you, however, and wish to see you do well in this course! I will do all I can for those that ask and are willing to put the work in.

Required Texts

Books are expensive. I endeavour wherever possible to seek source texts with which we will work that can be found easily and inexpensively. I will be providing you with a reading list with all the required texts for this course, with links available to those that can be found online. You are encouraged, however, to seek hard copies of many of these texts. Many of them are worth having. I would also like you to note that in this discipline, we will often undertake to analyze a broad array of different things. These include books, for sure, but also essays, articles, magazines, comic books, games, movies, YouTube clips, social media posts, and many other things. So as we’re clear, we use the word “text” for any one of these kinds of things we’re studying. I will refer to your “text” as the thing you’re studying, whatever that looks like, though if we refer to “books”, “novels” or the like, we mean specifically those categories. Make sense?

Keep in mind that in arts courses like these, while the week-to-week assignments will be kept to a minimum, there is often a good deal of reading to be done, requiring a commensurate time commitment. I have, however, attempted to keep the readings under 250 pages each. There are, however, novels included in this reading list, so keep that in mind going forward!

SPECIAL NOTE: The first week of class, Sept. 11th and 13th, requires you to have read a novel. There is no class on Sept. 6th, but you are expected to attend class on the 13th having read Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. It might seem daunting, but it will be worthwhile.

Marking Breakdown

Your mark breakdown is as follows:

Narrative Assignment (1500 words) – 15%
Rhetorical Analysis Independent Study Project (3000 words) – 35%
Argumentative Essay (2000 words) – 20%
Class Participation – 15%
Peer Group Work – 15%

The value percentage assigned to each assignment should not indicate the level of attention you pay to them. The work we do in previous weeks is foundational to those that follow. Note that while there are relatively few graded assignments, the reading and writing requirements of each are extensive and you should plan your time accordingly.
Assignment Details

Narrative Assignment (1500 Words): The first unit we will be exploring in this class concerns Narrative. These are the stories we tell and the value they possess and functions they serve for us socially. The skills you will learn in this unit include writing such that you impart a course of events to the reader and employ the social functions of narration. The deadline will approach rapidly, so I encourage you to start thinking about this assignment as soon as possible.

You have two options:

1) Write a narrative, either creative or from your own life, in the style of one of the authors’ works we have studied in this unit. This is the first of two components to this option, and must be at least 1000 words. The second component is a write-up as to how you employed the author’s style to narrate your story. This must be at least 500 words, and involves identifying key aspects of the author’s narration, as well as some of the features of those aspects, particularly those you used to write your narrative. Success in this assignment requires careful attention to this second component. I want to see you demonstrate that you understand the significant features of the author’s work, both by your clearly describing them, and employing them.

2) You can also write an involved analysis one of the author’s works. This must be 1500 words in length, and adopt a formal essay writing style, including a clearly-stated and focused thesis—a central argument your essay strives to make about that text—and cogently argued claims that follow in argumentative paragraphs that support that thesis. It must reference and make use of quotations from the text you are analyzing, and must also reference at least two peer-reviewed secondary sources that support your claim. Success in this assignment requires clear language and functional argumentation. I recommend starting with the secondary sources. You will learn quickly how to access these sources through the University library, and they will quite often provide you with your thesis if you find their arguments compelling!

Rhetorical Analysis Independent Study Project (1000-word Report and 2000-word Analysis Essay): Embedded in the concepts we explore in the narrative unit will be the foundations of our rhetorical analysis unit. Through exploring narrator’s voices, for example, we will learn about ethos, or what the values are that the narrator possesses and how that dictates the audience for whom the text is written. These are core concepts in rhetoric that will allow you to better understand one of the most important concepts in this discipline—that just as language structures how we understand the world around us, in learning that language and forming any given expression at any given time, we impart with it an argument—implicit assumptions, assertions of “truisms”, distinctions of class, of race, of social divisions, and many many other criteria. These are imparted simply in the words we choose to use and the words we choose not to, whether we realize it or not. It is in this way that literally everything becomes an argument.

It is not only critical to this course that you understand this concept, but critical to every moment of your lives. Understanding what implicit assumptions govern any kind of message you receive will enable your ability to think critically about it. Understanding these assumptions allow you to “think outside the box” and distinguish you in the eyes of those that might value your critical thinking. It is the most essential piece of your education in this course, and I argue in University as a whole.
The assignment details are as follows: This assignment will take place between September 27th and October 25th. There will be no scheduled class during this time period. Instead you will engage in a good deal of independent research, reading, analysis, and writing. I will be providing you with a list of four essays. You will read all four of them, and then you will choose one of them on which to base your project. You will then go about your research. I want you to use the University of Waterloo library to search for at least 6 peer-reviewed articles concerning your chosen text. Of those 6, 2 of them must be broadly written in defense of your chosen text (clearly supporting it in some way). 2 of those articles must be in some central way critical of your chosen text. You will read through all of these articles carefully until you understand your chosen text to the best of your ability.

You will then go about your writing. Your first task is to provide a breakdown or report, organized in the most effective way you can, and at least 1000 words long, which furnishes me with the following information:

- I want you to simplify and re-state the thesis of your chosen text in your own words, but as clearly and as comprehensively as you can.

- You will do the same with as many argumentative claims as you can in your chosen text.

- I want you to break down for me in clear and focused language what are the implicit assumptions your chosen text is making. These might include, but are not limited to; who is this text written for? What use of rhetorical devices is the author employing to make their point, such as ethos, logos, and pathos?

- I would also like you to break down for me in clear and concise language, what some potential refutations might be to some of the simplified claims you provided for me earlier might be. If, for example, your author uses pathos to appeal to a particular kind of audience in one of their claims that you have identified, does that leave out an audience that might not agree? Who might that be?

Finally, in a 2000-word essay, I want you to write an analysis of your chosen text. In that analysis, I want you to make an argument about that text in some respect. At the point before you write this essay, you will have read, absorbed, and broken down a piece of valuable critical thinking from our cultural and philosophical history. You will also have read several perspectives on that text which will have illuminated the assumptions in that text to you. You are now equipped to lend your own perspective. This is a formal essay, and I will be looking for critical and careful thought represented through clear and assertive language that argues from evidence, not from opinion.

This is a large assignment, and it will involve a good deal of independent work, but I want you to succeed, and I believe each and every one of you is capable of it. I am here to help as well. I will be ready, willing, and able to provide you with as much assistance as I can in pursuing your goal. None of these texts are particularly long, nor are they terribly complex in their language, but they deal with complex issues you are confronted with every day, and understanding your own perspectives on these issues will serve you well for many years to come, regardless of your success in this assignment.

**Argumentative Essay (2000 Words):** In the analysis assignment, you will have learned and employed extensive strategies to break down and understand a text’s implicit assumptions and arguments. Those assumptions are employed for a rhetorical purpose you will have identified, whether it is simple or more complex, some kind of clear *intent* should
follow from the elements of the text you break down and analyze, in the form of a thesis. The third unit is about producing argumentation in the exact same way, and in the culmination of that unit, you will be expected to produce for me an argumentative essay that argues for just such a thesis—only this time, it will be your own. Your arguments will be expected to follow strictly from evidence you present, and must conform to a clearly presented thesis statement. Arguments must also respect all perspectives of the argument fairly. All good arguments are well-researched, and therefore external sources are a large part of your grade. These must include at least one peer-reviewed source, and they must be arranged in a Works Cited section following your essay.

Your choice of topic for this essay is your own—you may choose the debate into which you would like to insert yourself. A large part of this assignment, however, will be a prearranged meeting with me so that you may submit to me your topic choice for my approval, and we can discuss how you will argue your main claim. I may insist you do not argue a particular topic for many reasons. Some arguments will have been "played out" in the public sphere, and I will ask that you pursue a new topic so that you will be treading new ground. Some arguments may be debated endlessly, yet have clear solutions in spite of those debates, such as the debate on climate change. I will ask for a new topic in those cases as well! If you are at all concerned about your topic for reasons such as these, it would behoove you to arrive with more than one topic choice in mind! Do not worry too much, however. I will be as encouraging as I can be in developing your topic, and we will do everything we can to arrive at a topic you will be comfortable with. During the week of meetings, there will be no scheduled classes. Success with this final assignment will follow from a clearly stated thesis, and objective argumentation that follows from credible evidence.

**Class Participation:** It is the nature of our subject matter, language and communication, to be participatory. Much of your study in university will be solitary, but the fruits of your labour involve the attention of others. You are expected to contribute to class discussions to the best of your ability. This is frequently a significant portion of your final grade in this discipline, and this class is no different.

**Peer Groups**

Again, writing itself may be a solitary process, but one of its primary purposes is communicative: we write for others, and to communicate well is one of the essential aspects of this course. Consequently in our first seminar you will be divided into roughly equal groups, and these will be your peer group for the term. As part of that group, your job in our weekly seminars will be to work together to address some of the questions I will put to you about the text we are studying that week. I will be outlining the activity of peer groups more comprehensively in the first seminar of the term on Sept. 13th, though rest assured that your grades in this aspect of the course will come from my attention to your participation with one another throughout the term.

**Assignment Format and Submission Guidelines**

Your essays are to be submitted to me via email on the day it is due at 11:00 PM. It must be in either Word Document or PDF format. If you require accommodation with regards to file format, please speak to me about it. It must be in a simple and legible font, 12 pt. font size, and double-spaced, with normal margins (i.e. 2.54 cm). Please no title pages, and no graphical content without prior approval. Pages must also be numbered, in the upper-right
Each essay must have a byline, single-spaced, which includes your name, my name, the date, the course code, and the essay title. Feel free to get creative with the titles, but don’t go nuts. Essays may exceed the word count, but don’t waste my time either—the goal is to be as clear and concise as possible. Works Cited sections are required for all essays, and must conform to MLA 8 standards.

**Schedule**

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<th>Required Reading</th>
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<td>Sept 9 - 15</td>
<td>Joseph Conrad: <em>Heart of Darkness</em></td>
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<td>Start your reading early here, folks!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 16 - 22</td>
<td>Zora Neale Hurston: <em>Their Eyes Were Watching God</em></td>
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<td>Sept 23 - 29</td>
<td>Mary Shelley: <em>Frankenstein</em></td>
<td>Narrative Assignment Due: Sept. 23rd</td>
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<td>Sept 30 - Oct 6</td>
<td><strong>ISU Project – Week 1</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 28 - Nov 3</td>
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Nov 4 - 10 | **Essay Proposal Meetings**
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Nov 11 - 17 | E.M. Forster: “The Machine Stops” (Short Story)  
Nicholas Carr: “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” (Article)
Nov 18 - 24 | Slavoj Zizek: *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* (Film)
Nov 25 – Dec 1 | William Shakespeare: *As You Like It* (Play)  
**Argumentative Essay Due: Nov. 27th**  
This reading subject to change

**Policies**

**Late Assignments:** As I’ve mentioned previously, essays are due at 11:00 PM on the day in is due. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day. Extensions may be discussed with me with reasonable advance notice and given appropriate circumstances, though I reserve the right to request proof of your mitigating circumstances.

**Contact:** I am always available to field any questions or concerns you may have through email or during my listed office hours. For various reasons, mainly to do with maintaining firm and Marxist distinction between my working hours and non-working hours, I maintain a schedule policy about emails--I only check them generally between the hours of 9 AM - 5 PM, Monday to Friday. Over the weekend, I generally do not check my work email. In fact, I encourage you to mediate your working hours in the same way, so as you are not effectively always working. I think of it as unreasonable to ask this of you. This may result in some issue with your assignments, due dates, etc. during times that I will not be available. In those instances, go ahead and email me, and I will do my best to accommodate you as best I can given the circumstances. Always do your best to respect deadlines, and from there on, I can do a great deal to help, particularly where it might be the case that my personal policies have conflicted with your success in the course.

**Marking and Feedback:** While many of you are familiar with marking practices in the arts, they tend to differ somewhat from the marking practices in the STEM disciplines. In those disciplines, there is often a concretized idea of a perfect score in which you have done all that is required, and made no errors. In the arts, there are frequently criteria, but it can never be easily said that a student has or has not embodied them, and almost never is it said that they have embodied any of them perfectly. This means that we arts instructors tend to build upward, observing what you've accomplished and assign a grade as to how much you have developed what you have been writing. **This means that in this class, an**
85% on a paper is an excellent grade, and a 95% is almost unheard of. Strive to do as well as you can, but temper your expectations accordingly! Like chess, you can learn to write well, but mastering it takes a lifetime, and even then, you will likely never master it fully.

It is my natural inclination to write a great deal, and given both space and free time, I would write extended monologues to each of you (much like this one :P) as feedback for your assignments. That said, I cannot do so, as that leaves no time for my other industry. This will mean a few things as regards feedback.

You are expected to submit your assignments, and given a measure of time in which I will mark them (usually a week) they will be returned to you. Assignments will have some marginal comments, and some end comments as well. Both of these will be fairly brief. These assignments will be returned to you in PDF format. This is because I often use my tablet to write marginal comments, and do so using a stylus. Doing so requires that I convert it to PDF format. If you would prefer that I return your assignments to you in a different format, please let me know. Where students have a great deal in common as regards to things they have done well or had some difficulty with, I will attempt to give general feedback in seminar. Finally, if after that you would like more feedback on your assignments, my email door is always open. Please feel free to write me with questions you have, and I will do my best to answer them fully!

University Policies

Academic Integrity
The Faculty of Arts requires all instructors to incorporate the following note on avoidance of academic offenses:

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.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. 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 professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm 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,

http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals,


Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132,
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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

About Me

I am a fourth-year PhD candidate at the University of Waterloo. I have been a TA and adopted various roles in teaching for eight years now, and have taught several courses in Shakespeare, Business Communications, and have been a TA in this course for four terms now, and have taught this course as a GI once before. My areas of study include Discourse and Text Analysis, Folklore, Shakespeare, and American Literature. These are pretty broad in scope, but you tend to specialize more and more as you carry on in your field. I am thirty-three years old, and am native to Southern Ontario, born and raised in Whitby, doing my undergraduate degree and my MA at Trent University in Peterborough. I am, in case you cannot tell, a verbose man who is sometimes also casually profane--please forgive me if this bothers you. If it does, I will do my best to curb my language. My interests include reading and writing, of course, on all kinds of subjects, but I also enjoy fine dining and like to experiment with cooking, trying interesting scotch and beer, I like painting, and I very much enjoy games of all kinds as well.

Politically speaking, I am a liberal progressive. I am not libertarian and I think that authoritarianism must also be curbed where it exceeds its mandate. This will not, to the best of my ability, influence how I assess the things about which you write, positively or negatively. It is about how you argue, not what you argue for, and I encourage you to keep this in mind. Your position on something doesn't earn or deduct you points, only your argumentation. To this degree I will always try to balance supportiveness and fairness in myself. My pedagogical philosophy is built upon embracing both the classroom and my expression as a contact zone for you--a place in which you will likely encounter new concepts and ideas and in which you must work with others that may or may not agree with you to develop your understanding. This means I do not coddle you with my language, and I will throw words like "ontology" out there, with the expectation that anything you do not understand, you will ask about, or take a moment to google and try to understand. I will also always take your questions seriously and with respect, as nothing should make you look or feel stupid in a classroom--only challenged. Classrooms are mediated spaces, but they are not "safe" spaces, per se. They are places to challenge and adapt, because that is what it means to learn.