ENGL 109: Intro. To Academic Writing

Prof. Aimée Morrison
Virtual Office hours: Thursdays, 12:00-2:00 or by appointment

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 every “class,” and some of what you write, you will hand in, or use to work on later for something else to hand in.

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

Pandemic note:

We’ve never had a fall semester like this before (I am including myself in this “we”). We are building this together. Someday, we will tell our grandchildren about these times. So let’s make something we can all be proud of, today.

This is an in-person class that is being offered entirely online, and asynchronously, in light of the risks of virus transmission that classrooms and campuses create. The course has been redesigned with COVID-times realities in mind, particularly that the wholesale changes to our usual living arrangements, work arrangements, financial opportunities, health concerns, childcare duties, and sense of reality, makes pretty much everything very unpredictable and also stressful. If you require flexibility or assistance beyond what’s provided, please let me know and we’ll try to figure something out.
Course meeting times

The course is organized into weeks, a repeating rhythm of readings, group work, and assignments. The intent is to add predictability to how the course works, but in a way that’s flexible enough to bend without breaking, in case of emergencies of all sorts, mine or yours. There are no “meetings” but there are regular “features” and content updates and these happen the same way every week, and you will be able to plan your way through the term according to your own situation and needs. There are things for you to do every week.

Contact information

If you need to email me, please do so directly through Learn. If your email is longer than a paragraph, it’s too long (unless you’re just telling me a story. I love stories.) If you need help understanding some part of the content of the course (“I don’t get how an explanation is different from a report. Can you explain it to me?”) then you will be using email to set up an appointment with me. If you need help understanding when things are due, check the online calendar on Learn, or the assignment sheets. If you need help understanding the course structure, check the syllabus.

New content is added to the class website all the time: that’s the best place to find me. The AMA forum is always open and if you put a question in there, I’ll be answering them weekly. You can attend my open virtual office hours. Many questions can be answered by looking at the web site, the textbook, or the syllabus. Ask group members for help. I love having appointments to talk with students “live” rather than writing pages and pages of email.

True story: I have 70 undergraduate students this term, and five doctoral students, and if all of you email me all the time I’m going to throw my laptop out the window, crawl under my 18 pound heavy blanket with my cat, and eat candy while sobbing until I pass out or throw up. My never-emptied inbox is what makes me think that *this* might be the Bad Place. I’m going to do my best. Please also do yours.

Buy the Textbook

This book is the anchor content of the course. Get it: it’s an e-book that you can rent for 180 days through the bookstore, for $47. If you love buying very heavy books, you can buy it as a paperback from Amazon for $100.

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>Group work and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(ongoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Narrative</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact-Check Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Argument</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>November 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>December 4</td>
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</tbody>
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Detailed handouts describe what is expected of you from each assignment; please read these carefully 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.

Absence and Late Policy

To succeed in the course, you will need to work on it every week, even if I’m not taking “attendance.” Most deadlines in the course are your choice, or within your group. There is no reason to hand in late work, because you have so much freedom to choose when and how. If you require further accommodation beyond this, please let me know.

Access

I strive to make my classes accessible to whatever student happens to log in. 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.

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. We are all answerable to University policies governing ethical behaviour (Policy 33) and academic integrity (Policy 71), as well as to
those outlining grievance or dispute procedures (Policy 70). Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

You will:

- know the university policies that govern your behaviour
- participate actively in your own learning, while respecting the rights of others to learn as well: this means staying in contact with your assigned group, and doing your part in shared, which includes doing assigned readings.
- give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work
- ask for help when you need it

I will:

- adhere to the university policies that govern my behaviour
- make myself available for consultation online
- return assignments of 1 page or less within one week, and all others within 2 weeks
- provide helpful and respectful feedback on student work
- be ready to offer help when something technical or intellectual goes awry

A final word

Once more, welcome to the course! I hope you find as valuable as it will be challenging. I am looking forward to a productive and exciting semester, and to getting to know all of you.