

## English 101: Composition

Fall 2012

101-003: MWF 7:30-8:20 Robinson A125

101-005: MWF 8:30-9:20 Robinson A109

101-013 MWF 9:30-10:20 Robinson Hall A101

Pabich

Office Hours: TBA & via Blackboard Virtual Office Hours

E-mail: mpabich@gmu.edu

### Course Text

Lunsford, Andrea & John J. Ruskiewicz. *Everything's an Argument*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

*How do I know what I think until I see what I say?*

--E.M. Forster

### Abstract

For English 101 we aim to help you gain better control of your voice as a writer; become more conscious of, and handy with, the writing process; and get better acquainted with the kinds of writing you'll be doing in college.

To achieve these goals, we'll focus on critical thinking, argument, and rewriting. We are, all of us, writers, whether we're getting paid for it or not. We all have interesting thoughts. But—and this is important—it takes practice, and it takes revision, to shape those thoughts into interesting essays for somebody else to read. Nobody, and I mean *nobody*, gets it right the first time. Revision is where real writing happens.

Obviously, we'll be writing a lot, in a variety of contexts. We'll also be reading, and talking. People tend to think of reading and writing as separate things, but really, they always go together. We read our writing as we write, and we compose responses constantly (in our minds, at least) as we read. Writing is a kind of conversation, as well as a discipline. And, whether that conversation happens between writer and reader, between friends, or entirely within ourselves, we converse better when we have friendly, articulate and challenging partners.

*There is no such thing as good writing. There is only good rewriting.*

--Louis Brandeis

### The Class

*Grades.* Possible grades for this course are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, and NC (no credit). Getting a final grade of NC means that you would have to repeat English 101 in order to get credit. (Incompletes will not be given; unfinished work at the end of the semester results in an NC.) NC's do not appear on students' transcripts or affect students' GPA's.

Your semester grade will be determined using the following values:

Personal Essay	20%
Values Argument	20%
Research Essay	30%
Usage/Style Bell-ringer	5%
Assignments/Participation	<u>25%</u>
	100%

*Essays.* The backbone of our class consists of three graded writing assignments: a personal essay, an argument, and a research paper. For each essay we will write at least two drafts, to be reviewed in small-group writing workshops. The argument and personal essay will each be at least 1,000 words in length; i.e., about four pages. The body of the research essay will be 1,800 words in length; i.e., six pages, not counting the title and works cited pages. All essays must be word-processed, double-spaced, in 12-pt. Times New Roman or a similar font, with left and right margins of 1.25", and left-justified. We will discuss the specific content requirements of each essay as we get to it.

*Usage/style bell-ringers.* Many of our classes will begin with a five-minute "bell-ringer" presentation, dedicated to a specific issue of usage or composition. It's a way to brush up and get better acquainted with some good tricks of the trade in writing. The presentation will include a handout (with holes for a 3-ring binder), a talk, and some Q&A.

*Small assignments; participation.* Small assignments include all non-essay writing and reading assignments and in-class work that we will be doing in class and as homework. Participation includes taking part in our conversations and small-group activities. This is the day-to-day stuff of our class, and it's important.

## Policies

*Attendance.* In many ways a class such as ours depends on talking and working together. We're counting on you to do your part. Participation is necessary to getting credit; and you can only participate if you show up. Be here, be on time, and be prepared. Also (and obviously): keep your cell phones quiet.

*Late submissions.* I understand that life can happen; for that reason, I throw out one small assignment per student, per semester. I do not, however, accept late, or e-mailed, small assignments. **Repeat: do not e-mail me your homework.** Essays handed in up to one class meeting late will be docked a letter grade; e.g., an "A-" paper turned in a day late will be given a "B-." I don't accept essays that are more than one class meeting late.

*Students with disabilities.* If you have a documented disability and need appropriate accommodations, please notify me privately.

*Plagiarism.* We'll be discussing plagiarism--what it is and how to avoid it--in the coming weeks. Forthwith, the GMU English Department's official line on plagiarism:

Plagiarism means using the words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting.

Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions to this include information that can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writers' own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. What constitutes common knowledge can sometimes be precarious; what is common knowledge for one audience may not be so for another...In other words, writers provide a citation for any piece of information that they think their readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers, it will almost certainly ensure that writers will never be guilty of plagiarism.

*The essay is an exercise in honesty. And it takes practice and skill, being honest.*

--Anonymous

## Blackboard

Class materials, including assignments and some readings, will be available on our Blackboard site. **Make sure to print out all readings.** There will also be an option to turn in certain assignments via Blackboard's journals link (we'll discuss this in class). I am available for meetings via the Blackboard instant-messaging app (Virtual Office Hours). You should make it a habit to check Blackboard regularly.

## The Writing Center

In their own words, The Writing Center "seeks to foster a writing climate on campus and beyond by offering free writing support to George Mason students, faculty, staff and alumni. No matter what your writing abilities are, our writing specialists can help you develop the skills you need to become a successful writer." And the service is free! For more information, consult their website: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>