

# **ENGLISH 101. COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION.**

Fall 2012

Monday, Wednesday & Friday 3:30 - 4:20 PM

Robinson A 109

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Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 – 2:00 PM in Robinson A 412(A)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION.**

Welcome to English 101! During this course, we will be working together to improve your abilities as a writer, as well as a reader and a thinker. At the end of this course, it is my hope that you will have an appreciation of the ways in which writing can be used in both the academic world and beyond.

## **COURSE GOALS.**

English 101 is designed to help improve your abilities to read, write, and think at a college level. You will develop and explore strategies to help you use writing as a tool for exploring and reflecting on your own ideas, as well as for informing and persuading your readers. You will need to develop critical reading and research techniques to support your writing, and learn appropriate technologies to assist your writing. English 101 emphasizes writing as a rhetorical process: you will explore beneficial ways to break a writing task into smaller steps such as generating and organizing ideas, investigating your topic, creating early drafts, seeking feedback, and revising. You will also improve your ability to adapt your writing to the needs of an audience or a situation, and your ability to revise and edit your own writing.

## **TEXTBOOK & REQUIRED MATERIALS.**

*Writing Today* (2nd Edition) by Richard Johnson-Sheehan & Charles Paine  
ISBN: 978-0205210084 / 880 pages / Published January 2012

USB Flashdrive or online storage space (eg. Dropbox) for backing-up files

## METHODS OF INSTRUCTION.

This class is a participation heavy course. It will involve a significant amount of student discussion and writing. Students may be asked to work individually as well as collaboratively as they practice writing techniques, learn how to affectively research, try different strategies of drafting, and discuss their own writings as well as the works of established authors. Students who regularly show up and are engaged in the daily activities will likely succeed in this class.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING PERCENTAGES.

15%	Essay 1: Personal Essay, 3-5 pages (Due: 9/17)
15%	Essay 2: Review, 3-5 pages (Due: 10/1)
30%	Essay 3: Researched Argument, 6-8 pages (Due: 11/12)
10%	Essay 4: Portfolio Reflection, 2-3 pages (Due: 12/7)
5%	Researched Argument Presentation
15%	Homework and Short Assignments
10%	Participation (Reading questions, in-class work, etc.)

## GRADING SCALE.

A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%
B	83-86%	D+	67-69%
B-	80-82%	D	<67%

## GENERAL EDUCATION.

This course is part of the GMU General Education Program, which is designed to help students prepare for advanced work in their major field and for a lifetime of learning. For more information on the mission of the General Education Program, consult the University Catalog or visit <http://provost.gmu.edu/gened/>

## GRADING POLICY.

Students must earn a grade of C or higher to complete the 101 requirement; students whose grades are lower than a C will earn an NC.

A grade of NC reflects the philosophy that learning to write in an academic setting is a developmental process and that some students may require more time in this development. Since this grade does not appear on students' final transcripts or affect students' Grade Point Averages, students are not penalized for requiring additional time to meet the course requirements in ENGL101. Because of this policy, grades of Incomplete are not given in ENGL101.

Different formal essay assignments will each have some different specific grading criteria. However, in grading essays, I use the following general criteria:

A **"C" level grade** (70-79%) denotes average college-level writing and achievement. The essay is a competent response to the assignment: it meets, to some degree, all the assignment requirements, and demonstrates that the author has put significant time and effort into communicating his/her ideas to his/her targeted audience. It has a thesis, presents some support, and moves from point to point in an orderly fashion; sentence-level errors do not significantly prevent comprehension. Essays that do not meet these criteria will not earn a "C."

Note: You must complete all main essay assignments to earn a "C" or higher. However, merely completing assignments does not guarantee this grade.

A **"B" level grade** (80-89%) highlights a strong example of college writing and thinking. In addition to meeting the "C" level requirements, such an essay goes further in some way(s): it demonstrates some insight into the "gray areas" of the topic, provides original or very thorough support that is tightly woven into the overall argument, reads smoothly at both the sentence and paragraph levels, and/or exhibits a personal "voice" or style. It has few sentence-level errors.

An **"A" level grade** (90-100%) marks an essay that is a delight for the reader. Even more than in a "B" essay, its author anticipates and responds to possible reader questions, uses a wide range of supporting evidence, engages the reader in a provocative conversation, provides unexpected insights, and/or uses language with care and facility.

**"D"** level essays do not meet the basic expectations of the assignment.

## **MIDTERM GRADES.**

In English 101, students receive a midterm letter grade based on the work of the first seven weeks of the course. The purpose of this grade is to help students find out how well they are doing in the first half of the course in order to make any adjustments necessary for success in the course as a whole. Instructors calculate letter grades based on the completed course assignments as weighted on the syllabus through the seventh week. The work in the second half of the semester may be weighted more heavily, and so the midterm grade is not meant to predict the final course grade. Students may view their grade online as soon as it is recorded.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT ETIQUETTE.**

Participation includes attending class, preparing by doing the reading and writing assignments, and actively engaging in class discussion, in-class writing, peer review workshops, and presentations. Being actively present in class means being intellectually aware as well as showing basic courtesy and respect for your classmates and for me. This means you should put your cell phone away at the beginning of class. Students who are sleeping, carrying on private conversations, texting, or working on assignments for other classes (etc.) are not actively present and will therefore lose class participation points for that day.

In-class work and short homework assignments will be scored with a check, a check-plus, or a check-minus. A check means you met the goals of the assignment, a check-plus means you went above and beyond, and a check-minus means you did not meet the goals of the task or did not attempt it. There are no make-ups for these assignments, so if you don't come to class you won't get credit for them. Regular attendance and general attentiveness during class will earn you a "B" for your participation grade. Stronger participation will raise that grade. Absences, frequent tardiness, or lack of active engagement in class will lower that grade.

**Your lowest homework/assignment score will be thrown out at the end of the semester, so you have one free pass if you miss an assignment or an in-class activity.**

While I expect that you attend class and arrive on time, I do understand that some absences are unavoidable. Your participation grade will suffer after three absences or frequent late arrivals. If you do miss class, you are still responsible for turning in assignments on time and finding out what we went over that day. If you have a documented extenuating circumstance that prevents you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible. The earlier you contact me, the more likely I will be able to help you out.

## **SUBMISSION AND LATE WORK POLICY.**

Each formal writing assignment must be turned in as a digital copy, uploaded to Blackboard, by the due date. Digital copies will be uploaded before the start of class on the day that it is due. Assignments should be saved with an appropriate filename (eg. "YourLastName\_AssignmentName.doc). Smaller homework assignments will generally be turned in as hard copies in class. All formal assignments should be typed using Times New Roman, size 12 font, and double-spaced. Put your name, the instructor's name, the class session, and the date at the top of the first page. You should keep all of your assignments as they are handed back or emailed back to you. These will make up your final portfolio.

Late assignments are those arriving any time after the class period on the due date. Late assignments will immediately lose 5% of their points, and lower by several points each additional day the assignment is late. If you know you won't be in class on a day that an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn it in ahead of time.

## **LAPTOP DAYS.**

Each Friday is our designated Laptop Day. We will use our laptops/netbooks in our class activities as per the goal of GMU to include the use of technology in general education classes. You are asked to bring your personal laptop or check out a netbook from Robinson A 104. You will need your Student ID and a netbook checkout card (which I will distribute) to get a netbook. We'll also be using laptops during our peer review days.

## **REVISION POLICY.**

Revision is one of the most important aspects of the writing process. Learning how to revise is critical to your development as a writer. You will therefore engage in revision constantly throughout the semester as you write, but any of the first three major writing assignments may be revised and resubmitted after it has been graded. I allow these revisions because I believe writing is a process; you may require more time to develop an effective paper, and you should use the opportunity to use feedback constructively. Revisions must demonstrate substantial change to the focus, support, approach, and/or organization of the essay in addition to comprehensive error correction, or they will be returned with no grade change. If the revision warrants, a new grade will be given and will replace the original mark. Revising a paper does not, however, guarantee a higher grade.

To revise a paper, you must first schedule a conference with me to discuss how to strengthen the essay. Revised papers must also include a minimum 200-word reflection describing the strategies and approaches you used for your revision and why you think the writing in the essay's revision is stronger. I will not accept the revision if you do not include the short reflection. Revisions must be submitted with all previous drafts, and completed within two weeks of the conference.

## ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another source without giving that source credit. Writers give credit through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes; a simple listing of books, articles, and websites is not sufficient.

This class will include direct instruction in strategies for handling sources as part of our curriculum. However, students in composition classes must also take responsibility for understanding and practicing the basic principles listed below.

To avoid plagiarism, meet the expectations of a US Academic Audience, give their readers a chance to investigate the issue further, and make credible arguments, writers must:

Put quotation marks around, and give an in-text citation for, any sentences or distinctive phrases (even very short, 2- or 3-word phrases) that writers copy directly from any outside source: a book, a textbook, an article, a website, a newspaper, a song, a baseball card, an interview, an encyclopedia, a CD, a movie, etc.

Completely rewrite—not just switch out a few words—any information they find in a separate source and wish to summarize or paraphrase for their readers, and also give an in-text citation for that paraphrased information

Give an in-text citation for any facts, statistics, or opinions which the writers learned from outside sources (or which they just happen to know) and which are not considered “common knowledge” in the target audience (this may require new research to locate a credible outside source to cite)

Give a new in-text citation for each element of information—that is, do not rely on a single citation at the end of a paragraph, because that is not usually sufficient to inform a reader clearly of how much of the paragraph comes from an outside source.

Writers must also include a Works Cited or References list at the end of their essay, providing full bibliographic information for every source cited in their essay.

While different disciplines may have slightly different citation styles, and different instructors may emphasize different levels of citation for different assignments, writers should always begin with these conservative practices unless they are expressly told otherwise. Writers who follow these steps carefully will almost certainly avoid plagiarism. If writers ever have questions about a citation practice, they should ask their instructor!

Instructors in the Composition Program support the George Mason Honor Code, which requires them to report any suspected instances of plagiarism to the Honor Council. All judgments about plagiarism are made after careful review by the Honor Council, which may issue penalties ranging from grade-deductions to course failure to expulsion from GMU.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.**

Students with documented disabilities are legally entitled to certain accommodations in the classroom. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC. I will be happy to work with students and the DRC to arrange fair access and support.

## **GMU NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY.**

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or age. GMU shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.

## **GMU EMAIL.**

Students must activate their Mason email account and check it regularly. For privacy reasons, all class-related emails will be sent only to students' official GMU email addresses.

## **IMPORTANT DATES.**

First Day of Classes: August 27, 2012

Labor Day (no class): September 3, 2012

Last Day to Add a Course: September 4, 2012

Last Day to Drop a Course: September 4, 2012

Selective Withdrawal Period: October 1, 2012

Columbus Day (no class): October 8, 2012

Thanksgiving Recess (no class): November 21-25, 2012

## **THE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER.**

Since you will be writing several papers in this course, you may want to visit the University Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>), located in Robinson A114, for assistance. The Writing Center is one of the best resources you will find on campus. They have an outstanding website that offers a wealth of online resources for student writers. You can schedule a 45minute appointment with a trained tutor to help with any phase of the writing process. You can even obtain assistance with papers by visiting the online writing center at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/owl/index.html>, but please plan ahead and allow yourself at least 23 days to receive a response. Make an appointment by visiting their Web site, calling 703-993-1200, or stopping by and scheduling a session.

## ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS.

### **Essay 1: Personal Essay** (3-5 pages)

Write a personal essay in which you explore a specific moment in your life that helped you to learn a lesson or make a change. It will utilize scene, dialogue, and the tools of descriptive writing to tell a personal story in a creative way. Let the reader know what you learned from this experience.

### **Essay 2: Review** (3-5 pages)

Imagine that you are a reviewer for an entertainment magazine or website, then write a review based on a performative piece (movie, TV show, or play). You will utilize persuasive tools in order to sway your audience. Be sure to summarize your subject for your readers, who may not have seen or experienced it. Then discuss your subject based on expectations that you and your readers share. Explain to your readers why you are giving your subject a positive or negative review.

### **Essay 3: Researched Argument** (6-8 pages)

Plan, draft, and revise an essay that draws from at least five separate sources to present a recommendation or judgment about a topic of your choosing. You must have a specific argument that you wish you research and examine. Do not include your own personal experience as a central source for this essay. You should, however, make your own judgment clear. At least one source must be a substantial piece from a book. At least one other source should be an article from a scholarly journal. Your goal is to recommend to your reader what he or she should understand and/or do about this issue; be sure to address alternate ideas or counterarguments as needed.

This is not a “research essay” where you are reporting just what everyone else says. Here, you become the expert and teach your readers what you think they need to know. This is also not an “all about” essay (“all about Plato/WWII/Spam”): do not spend excessive time summarizing everything your sources say. Instead, narrow your focus to help you choose an angle that reveals a particular tension or problem, and draw from your sources to help you make the argument you feel is most useful.

You will present a short (5 minutes or less) presentation to share your researched topic and argument with the class. This also gives you experience presenting information in a classroom setting.

### **Essay 4: Portfolio Reflection** (2-3 pages)

Write an introductory essay to your portfolio of collected writings for this semester. Your portfolio should include final drafts of your major essays, at least one early draft of an essay, and three other pieces of writing from this class. (You may include 1-2 other pieces of writing from outside this class if you wish.) The introductory essay should explain (a) how the elements of your portfolio connect to one another, and (b) what all this writing “goes to show” about you as a person, a writing-learner, and/or a writer. You should quote from your own writings to help show what you mean.

## **OTHER ASSIGNMENTS.**

### **In-class writing assignments**

Many class days will include short sections of in-class writing time or group activities. These assignments will tie in with the topics of the class and/or help brainstorm ideas for writing topics. They will be handed in at the end of class and cannot be made up.

### **Short homework writing assignments**

Some short writing assignments will be assigned as homework throughout the semester. Some will be posted to Blackboard, and others I will ask you to bring to class with you.

### **Readings**

You will read both rhetorical theory and sample essays throughout the semester to prepare for class each discussion. Most of these readings will come from your textbook, while others will be handed out in class or posted on Blackboard. It is very important that you do the required reading so that you can participate in class discussion.

### **Reading Questions**

To help ensure that you are keeping up with readings and to open class discussions, you will be asked to post two questions from each reading on the Blackboard discussion page prior to class. Questions can be about parts of the reading that did not make sense to you or questions that stemmed from certain passages of the text that you would like to explore. Completion of all required question postings will earn you 100%; missing 1- 2 posts will earn you 85%; and missing 3 or more will earn you 70%. This score will be part of your Participation grade.

### **Annotated bibliography**

An annotated bibliography of five sources will be required in the weeks leading up to the researched argument essay to help you locate and think about credible sources. This will be worth 10% of your Researched Argument grade.

### **Portfolio**

A final portfolio will be due at the end of the semester. It will include copies of all your major writing assignments, revisions, and your portfolio reflection. Your portfolio is a chance for you to have a collection of your writing and reflect on your growth throughout the term. It must be uploaded to Blackboard on the due date.

## CLASS SCHEDULE.

Please note: The class schedule, as always, is subject to change. Additional homework will be assigned as needed and these assignments will be given out in class and/or posted on Blackboard.

CLASS DAY	CLASS AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
M 8/27	Discuss syllabus, textbook, and class goals. Personal introductions. Introduction to Blackboard.	
W 8/29	Discus genres and academic writing.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 1, 2 "Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott (PDF on Blackboard)
F 8/31	Introduction to personal essay. Choosing a topic. Narrowing a topic. Introduction to thesis.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 4, 14 "The Good Immigrant Student" p. 615
M 9/3	<b>LABOR DAY - NO CLASS</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
W 9/5	Introduction to using dialogue and creating scenes in personal essay.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 21 Bring in a list of 3-4 ideas for what you can write about for Personal Narrative
F 9/7	Introduction to topic sentences, transitions, organizational strategies.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 15, 20
M 9/10	Introduction to peer reviews and discussion on first drafts.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 18 Personal Essay Draft Due
W 9/12	Peer reviews for personal essay.	
F 9/14	Using descriptive writing. Introduction to pathos, ethos, and logos. Intro to Review.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 6, 22 "Harry Potter's Girl Trouble" p. 638 "Why We Crave Horror Movies" p. 641
M 9/17	Advanced thesis discussion.	<b>Personal Essay Final Draft Due</b> <i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 35
W 9/19	Adding support to claims. Discuss points and counterpoints.	
F 9/21	Persuasion and avoiding fallacies.	Review Draft Due

CLASS DAY	CLASS AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
M 9/24	Peer reviews for Review.	
W 9/26	Strategies for revision.	
F 9/28	<b>CLASS CANCELLED: FALL FOR THE BOOK</b>	Go to a Fall for the Book event. Write a 1-2 page rave of the event for extra credit
M 10/1	Discuss summary vs. analysis.	<b>Review Final Draft Due</b>
W 10/3	Introduction to Researched Argument.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 13 "Rapture Read: The Science of Self Delusion" p. 769
F 10/5	Field trip to the Library.	
T 10/9	Finding and evaluating sources. Discuss primary vs. secondary.	Topic list for Researched Argument <i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 24, 25
W 10/10	Using outside sources in your argument. Discuss note-taking and outlining.	
F 10/12	Introduction to Annotated Bibliography.	<i>Writing Today</i> pp. 325-236
M 10/15	Discuss paraphrasing and quoting without plagiarism.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 26
W 10/17	In-text citations and works cited - using MLA.	Annotated Bibliography Due <i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 27
F 10/19	In-class writing day.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 19
M 10/22	Discuss further development of evidence and writing for an audience.	Thesis and Introductory Paragraph of Researched Argument Due
W 10/24	Peer reviews for introductory paragraph and thesis of Researched Argument.	
F 10/26	Grammar day.	Look over <i>Writing Today</i> Part 8
M 10/29	Discuss editing strategies and sentence level issues.	

CLASS DAY	CLASS AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
W 10/31	Additional research strategies.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 32 Researched Argument Draft Due
F 11/2	Peer reviews for Researched Argument	
M 11/5	CONFERENCES	
W 11/7	CONFERENCES	
F 11/9	CONFERENCES	
M 11/12	5-minute research presentations.	<b>Researched Argument Final Draft Due</b>
W 11/14	5-minute research presentations.	
F 11/16	5-minute research presentations.	
M 11/19	TBA	
W 11/21	<b>THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
F 11/23	<b>THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
M 11/26	Introduction to Portfolio reflection. Discuss portfolio.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 30
W 11/28	Review writing strategies.	
F 11/30	In-class writing day.	Portfolio Reflection Draft Due
M 12/3	Peer reviews for Portfolio reflection.	
W 12/5	Discuss writing for publication and writing online. Practice cover letters.	<i>Writing Today</i> Ch. 29
F 12/7	Wrap-ups.	<b>Portfolio Final Draft Due</b>

EXAM DAY is 12/10. We will have an end of semester celebration and reflect on class achievements.