

**English 101**  
**Fall 2012**  
**MWF 330-420, Robinson B205**

**Professor Spencer Seward**

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**Office:** Robinson 412A

**Office Hours:** T 3-4, W 430-530 or by appointment

**Course Wiki:** <http://engh101050f2012.pbworks.com/>

**Welcome to English 101!**

Here, we are community with a common goal: to improve as writers and critical thinkers. This is a skill-building class and like most crafts worth learning, writing, arguably the broadest of all the crafts, requires a varied and often complex set of tools. Thankfully, writing and the learning of it are continually engaging, challenging, and rewarding experiences. Over the next fifteen weeks, this class will show you how.

In this class, you will be expected to be an active reader and writer, engaging with texts both as producer and consumer. We will read and write a lot and nearly all of the reading in this class will be essays written on a range of diverse and fascinating topics. While a major goal of this class is skill building, we will not simply engage in rote, dry practice. We are here to exchange ideas, assessing and reflecting upon those we encounter in the essays from our book and those we encounter in the essays of our peers. In this class, you too are part of the discourse and the skills you learn here will help you continue to engage with the world as an engaged citizen and an active, critical thinker. This class seeks to illustrate that writing is not solely confined to the classroom and at its best has applications that range from the workplace to personal use to affecting major social change. While the writing you do here will help you improve your skills as a college essay writer, it will also prepare you to be an effective writer in the real world.

So again, welcome to English 101, a community of writers. It's going to be awesome. Get ready.

**Required Texts/Materials**

- *The Arlington Reader, Third Edition* (Available at the GMU Bookstore and online)
- Pen/paper daily
- Laptops on computer days (If you do not have a laptop and/or forget your laptop on our computer day, laptops can be checked out in Robinson A) **No laptops will be allowed on non-computer days**

**Recommended Text/Materials**

- A writing handbook (Hacker, Diana *A Writer's Reference, 7th Edition*)
- A flash drive

**Course Overview/Goals**

This course is designed to help you improve your abilities to read, write, and think at a college level. To accomplish this, we will work together to develop 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. This class emphasizes writing as a rhetorical process and 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 (both in the classroom and beyond), and your ability to revise and edit your own writing. In this class, we will also work towards developing as writers who can successfully employ strategies for writing as a recursive process of inventing, investigating, shaping, drafting, revising, and

editing. Finally, we will work towards developing college-level abilities for handling a range of texts, including increased abilities to closely and critically read a variety of nonfiction texts, including (but not limited to) argumentative texts, your own writing, and your peers' writing, in order to identify rhetorical strategies that you can apply to your writing. If all of this sounds confusing or intimidating, don't worry! We're here to work together as writers, exchanging ideas and constructive feedback, and we will practice (a lot) because writers (all of us!) can use more of it.

### **Methods of Instruction**

Most class meetings will be interactive and will involve a significant amount of student discussion and writing. You will be asked to work individually as well as collaboratively as we investigate issues, practice writing strategies and techniques, learn research and critical reading approaches, and review your own writing as well as that of your peers. Students who attend regularly and stay engaged in class activities, who keep up with all of the assignments, and who block off sufficient time each week for thoughtful drafting and revising usually succeed in this class.

### **The Wiki**

Our Wiki is the central nervous system of this class. On this page, you will find a copy of this Syllabus, a live daily schedule that **will be updated frequently (often daily!)**, supplemental readings that I will assign, links to a variety of outside (and very helpful!) resources, your personal pages, information on peer review, assignment prompts, and more. **You should check the Wiki daily and are responsible for keeping up to date on its contents.** If you are so inclined (and don't mind a little customization work), the Wiki can be set up to email you alerts when something changes, i.e. usually me posting something new and worth your attention. The Wiki is your friend. Use it.

### **My Email Policy/Office Hours**

All of the information you need to successfully prepare yourself for each class will either be on the Wiki and/or stated directly in class by me. To help with confusion and encourage class cohesion, I've instituted a Class Buddy system: by the end of the first week, you should have two names and emails of classmates you can contact in the event that confusion arises. If you have a question, first check the Wiki. If the Wiki does not clarify or answer your question, email your Class Buddies and if that doesn't work (at this point, your email should constitute some kind of emergency), you may email me. **I strongly encourage you to come see me in my office hours and/or make an appointment.** Office hours, unlike email, involve a personal exchange between two human beings and are always more productive and more fun than email. They are also a great opportunity to field all kinds of writing-related questions that are simply not possible to tackle via email. They, like the Wiki, are your friend. Use them.

### **Class Buddies:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

### **Laptop Days**

We will engage in writing and researching activities that require the use of technology once a week (on Wednesday). During these classes, as all classes, you will be expected to participate in the classroom activities and refrain from checking personal emails, IM chats, social networking sites, and any other activities that will distract you or other students from learning. If you forget to bring either of these items, it will be difficult for you to participate for that day.

Every **Wednesday** you will need to bring to class your laptop OR your student ID to checkout a laptop from Fairfax Classroom Support, located on the first floor Robinson A.

### Course Grading/Assignment Overview

<b>15%</b> <b>(75pts)</b>	<b>Narrative Exploration Essay (500-750 words)</b>	<b>Due Week 4</b>
<b>20%</b> <b>(100pts)</b>	<b>Rhetorical Analysis Essay (750-1100 words)</b>	<b>Due Week 7</b>
<b>30%</b> <b>(150pts)</b>	<b>Annotated Bibliography/Prospectus</b>	<b>Due Week 13</b>
<b>15%</b> <b>(75pts)</b>	<b>Opinion/Editorial Piece (Writing for the Real World): (500-750 words)</b>	<b>Due Week 15</b>
<b>10%</b> <b>(50pts)</b>	<b>Group Discussion Posts/Homework</b>	
<b>10%</b> <b>(50pts)</b>	<b>Participation/In-Class Writing</b>	
<b>Total:</b> <b>500 pts</b>		

**Narrative Exploration Essay:** In this essay, you will use specific, vivid, and descriptive details to narrate a personal experience that forced you to confront/rethink/question an assumption or belief.

**Rhetorical Analysis Essay:** In this essay, you will consider rhetorical situation to analyze campaign literature, policy public relations for a variety of subjects, and/or a political/social blog post. I will provide options for texts from which you may choose.

**Annotated Bibliography/Prospectus:** This is a hybrid project that mixes critical inquiry, source-gathering, argument-construction, and reflection. You will propose a critical inquiry/question/problem, choose and narrow your topic, and proceed to investigate! This investigation will reflect on the relationship between the sources you gather, your question/problem, your position on this question/problem, and the broader academic discourse. Finally, you will write a one-page reflection piece exploring your experience working on this assignment.

**Opinion/Editorial Piece (Writing for the Real World):** Building on the research you've done for the Anno-Bib/Prospectus assignment, this essay will require to assert an argument regarding the real-world ramifications of your topic. This will follow the format of Op/Ed pieces intended for newspaper publication and will address a specific audience. We will submit these to the newspaper of our choice!

#### **Group Discussion Posts/Homework**

In keeping with the theme of creating a community of writers (and as part of the practice of doing just that), you will be assigned to a Discussion Group that will engage in an intellectual exchange on our Wiki's Class Forum **three times this semester**. Exchange topics, assigned by me, will more than likely be topical and relate to a lively debate in our public discourse happening at that time (you should expect to see something regarding the presidential election, for example). Discussion Posts will be assigned as homework and will adhere to the following general format: you will post an initial post responding to the topic on a **Friday by 11:59 PM and will read and respond to a group-members post by 11:59 PM that Sunday**. Posts will be short and informal (100-250 words; more if you're feeling voluminous, verbose, superhuman, etc.). This is meant to be an open forum for dialogue and discussion. The only restrictions are that you treat the views of others (classmates and beyond) with respect (a rule that applies in this class *always*) and that you utilize college-level diction and sentence construction (another rule that always applies). This is a public forum and will be available to be read by the class, so anything you would not say or do in a public setting is likely inappropriate in a forum post as well. Remember that the more each of invests individually, the more our community benefits as a whole. Each post (including both

Friday *and* Sunday) is worth five points each for a total of thirty points possible over the course of the semester.

I will also assign homework assignments throughout the semester, including but not limited to, reading logs, Wiki posts, idea generation sketches, and reflective writing assignments. Homework assignments are worth three points each and, along with the Discussion Posts, will be calculated into the percentage of your final homework grade.

### **Class Participation/In-Class Writing**

As noted in the table above, Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Absences beyond three, regular tardiness, and/or frequent lack of engagement or disruptiveness will negatively affect your Participation grade. To earn a higher participation grade, you need to regularly volunteer contributions during full-class discussions, provide leadership or encouragement during group work, go the extra mile in giving specific feedback on your peers' writing, and/or otherwise demonstrate very strong preparation for and engagement in the class work. As also noted, your Participation grade will include short, informal in-class writing assignments, which will be graded on a completion basis. **I note Participation daily and each class is worth 1 point.** Students who are sleeping, reading the newspaper, browsing reddit for sloth bombs, carrying on private conversations, answering or texting on cell phones, looking at cat videos, or working on assignments for other classes (etc.) are not wholly, actively present and thus will lose class participation points for that day. You earn a full point by being actively and engaged—not simply present.

### **Grading Policy and Criteria**

All final essays must be accompanied by one or more earlier drafts. You must complete all main essay assignments to earn a “C” or higher. At semester’s end, I will divide your total points by 500 to calculate your final grade percentage. In this class, the grade ranges divide as follows:

**A+ (100-97.5%); A (97.4 %-93%); A- (92.9-90%); B+ (89-87.5%); B (87.4-83%); B- (82.9-80%); C+ (79-77.5%); C (77.4-73%)**

Students in English 101 **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 affect students’ Grade Point Averages (GPA), students are not penalized for requiring additional time to meet the course requirements in ENGH101. Because of this policy, grades of Incomplete are not given in ENGH101.

In grading essays, I use the following general criteria (assignment-specific rubrics will be handed out along with its respective prompt):

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.”

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 engages the reader in a provocative conversation. Even more than in a “B” essay, its author anticipates and responds to possible reader questions, uses a wide range of supporting evidence, structures arguments and analyses to create a fluid reading experience, provides unexpected insights, and/or uses language with care and facility.

“D” and “F” level essays do not meet the basic expectations of the assignment.

### **Submitting Class Work**

You will hand in your essay by the beginning of class the day it is due. Unless otherwise noted, all formal assignments should be typed using a standard, 12-point font, (if you are unsure, use Times New Roman), and should be double-spaced with one-inch margins. For the essays in this class, you will adhere to the MLA style guide (students wishing to use a style guide more appropriate to their major should come see me). You should keep all of your assignments as they are handed back to you.

### **Late Work Policy**

Late assignments will lose one-third of a letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. Late-work penalties cannot be changed through revision. In this class, however, I have instituted a **one-time Life Happens pass**. Each of you gets **one of these to use** this semester. There are no exceptions and no extra passes will be granted. Invoking this pass means that you can turn in your essay up to **three days past the due date with no grade penalty**. To use the pass, you will need to let me know **before the date the essay is due** and then simply write **Life Happens** on the top. No explanation of the reasons behind your use of this pass will be necessary; however, keep in mind that once you use the pass, **no exceptions to the late work policy will be made**.

### **Revision Policy**

You may revise **one of the first three** main essay assignments for a new grade. 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. Revisions must be submitted with all previous drafts and completed within two weeks of the essay’s return to you. If the revision results in an improved paper, I will—at a minimum—average the two grades to calculate a new final grade. You are not guaranteed a higher grade, but you cannot receive a lower one.

**If you would like to revise an essay, the following needs to occur** (note again that late-work penalties may not be made up through revision):

1. Before completing an optional revision, you must schedule a **Revision Conversation** with me, in person or via email. Revision Conversations should be scheduled **within two weeks of the essay’s return to you**. You should begin this conversation having carefully read all feedback on your essay and thus prepared to explain and ask questions about your revision plan.
2. Optional revisions must demonstrate substantial change to the focus, support, approach, or organization of the essay in addition to comprehensive error correction, or they will be returned with no grade change. Substantial change may be thought of as **change to at least 15-20% of the essay’s text**; you must address widespread problems as well as providing small fixes. Revised essays must, however, retain the original text’s topic; revision does not mean “write a new essay.”
3. Optional revisions must be completed **within two weeks of the day of your Revision Conversation**. This is true even if you were not available when most essays were returned.
4. Optional revisions should be resubmitted along with a paragraph describing the key changes made and how they better solve the writing problems of the overall essay. This reflective portion of the Revision option is a component of your grade and should be given serious and rigorous attention.

## Composition 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.

### 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 45-minute 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 2-3 days to receive a response. Make an appointment via their website.

### **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 of Catalog or visit <http://provost.gmu.edu/gened>

### **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. 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.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

### **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**

- Last Day to Add a Course: September 4th
- Last Day to Drop a Course (with no tuition penalty): September 4th
- Selective Withdrawal Period: October 1 - October 26

### **Weekly Schedule [SUBJECT TO CHANGE, Daily Schedule Posted on the Wiki]:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Discussion Topics</b>	<b>Major Assignments Due</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Introductions, Course Overview, College v. High School Writing, Rhetorical Context/Situation	
<b>Week 2</b>	Choosing A Topic, Invention Strategies, Descriptive Language, Thesis, Detail As Evidence Revision v. Editing, High Order v. Low Order, Peer Review	
<b>Week 3</b>	Rhetorical Situation, Assessing Writing Across Disciplines, Drafting, Critical Analysis, Reading as a Writer, Critical Reading Strategies	
<b>Week 4</b>	Rhetorical Analysis, Rhetorical Situation, Structure of Analysis, Organization	<b>Narrative Exploration Essay Due</b>

<b>Week 5</b>	Topic Sentences and Transitions, Claim Making, Fall for the Book	
<b>Week 6</b>	Proposing Questions, Argumentative Thesis Making, Considering Counterargument, Argument as Exchange, Conclusions	
<b>Week 7</b>	Quoting/Paraphrasing/Summarizing; Integrating Evidence, Citation Style Overview, Plagiarism, American Academic Standards	<b>Rhetorical Analysis Essay</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	Discipline Jargon, Academic Genres v. Real World Genres	
<b>Week 9</b>	Revision, Argument as Exchange Revisited, Review, Scholarly v. Non Scholarly Sources	
<b>Week 10</b>	Critical Inquiry, Continued Discourse, Rhetorical Context, Anno Bib	
<b>Week 11</b>	Research Librarian Visit, Evaluating Sources, BEAM, Critical Reading	
<b>Week 12</b>	Conferences	
<b>Week 13</b>	Thanksgiving No Class!	<b>Anno-Bib/Prospectus Essay Due</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	Real World Genres, Public Discourse	
<b>Week 15</b>	Review, Class Conclusion, Evaluations	
<b>Finals Week</b>		<b>Op-Ed Essay/Proof of Submission Due</b>