

EnglWrit 112: *College Writing*
Fall Semester 2015

Instructor: Ms. Heather Wayne
Office: Bartlett 1-F
Office hours: TTh 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

Class meeting days/time: TTh 11:30-12:45
Class location: School of Management 120
Email: hwayne@english.umass.edu

Welcome to *College Writing*! EnglWrit 112 is the only course that satisfies the university's CW requirement. A fundamental part of your general education at UMass Amherst, this course emphasizes critical thinking and communication, consideration of plural perspectives, and self-reflection on one's learning.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, we'll examine writing as a social act that always occurs within a particular context, and we'll analyze the choices available to writers in those contexts. Our goal is to help you grow as a college writer—not only for academic assignments, but also for the writing demands in your personal, professional, and civic lives. More specifically, we'll work together to improve your ability to:

- Write for a variety of purposes, audiences, and contexts
- Identify (and even play with) audience expectations and textual conventions
- Use the writing process, especially drafting, peer review, and revision, to re-see and extend your thinking—thus writing essays in which your thinking evolves rather than essays that defend pre-formed positions
- Develop your ideas through critical thinking, including analysis and synthesis
- Effectively and critically find, use, and cite diverse sources of information
- Copy-edit at every level (sentence, paragraph, essay) by considering conventional usage alongside your purpose
- Develop effective writing processes and strategies to apply beyond the course

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hoang, Haivan V., et al., eds. *Opening Conversations: A Writer's Reader*. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil Publishing, 2015. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea A. *EasyWriter*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. Print.

Zukowski, Patricia, et al., eds. *The Student Writing Anthology, 2015-16*. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil Publishing, 2015. Print.

ASSIGNMENTS

Essay Assignments

You will write five essays, each 1,000-1,250 words in length. Each will go through an extensive writing process, and each will introduce new challenges.

Unit I: Inquiring into Self asks you to analyze an aspect of your personal context—your history and experiences as a writer—and to write about this to a familiar audience. By working through a series of generative writing exercises, you will produce an essay that is focused on one or two moments illustrating the ways you have been a writer in one or more contexts. You may not consider yourself to be a “writer” because you’ve never written a novel, or a poem, or a short story, but one of the goals of this assignment is to help you think about the different ways to define “writer” so that you can recognize and take charge of the many ways in which you write every day. You should write a personal, descriptive essay exploring a central idea about who you are as a writer, asking yourself: how does the specific writing situation or context shape and influence what we write and how we define ourselves as writers?

For **Unit II: Interacting with Texts**, you will write a critical response to one or more published texts and to tailor the response to an academic audience, using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations to support your analysis. Academic writing values certain kinds of response that are both respectful of a text's author and stay true to the points the author is making. As a result, this essay will ask you to write a balanced essay that fairly summarizes and discusses

the published essay, while offering your own response to the essay's ideas. Rather than a pure summary of the essay or a pure reaction based only on your opinions and experiences, you are aiming for more of a "conversation" between you and the author—one that takes your own ideas and the writer's seriously. That said, however, you will also need to choose a focus for your own response that probably will not cover every point the author makes. We will practice response strategies in class with an example essay from your *Opening Conversations* textbook. However, for your own essay you will be assigned a group that you will work with during most of unit 2, and together you will choose an essay from *Opening Conversations* that interests you. This will allow you to have a degree of choice in what you write about, but still assure that you have peers reading your work who are familiar with the essay to which you're responding. Since everyone in your group will be responding to the same essay, you will have to make a concerted effort to make sure you are taking a unique angle in your response.

Unit III: Adding to a Conversation asks you to identify and pursue a line of inquiry that interests you, engage in research purposefully, and communicate what you learn to a more public audience. This unit will ask you to push your skills from unit 2 a little further by requiring you to interact with a variety of texts, and to begin to assess and define your own contexts for writing. Consequently, you'll have much more freedom with this assignment than you had with the others. You will begin with a topic you care deeply about and imagine a potential audience that might need or want to hear more about it. The only limitations on context are that the audience is an educated one (and thus will expect a researched paper to support the writer's statements) and the purpose for writing moves beyond "school writing" to a context that is more civic and/or public than solely an academic one. You will first engage in exploratory research, to get a better sense of the potential contexts and audiences for your topic, and then more focused research, to find sources of information to draw upon in your essay. We will be going to the library to learn more about the resources available and how to locate them. You might even conduct interviews and/or observations, depending on your topic, so that you can contribute primary research to the conversation. Because research is a complex, recursive process, this assignment will involve more steps along the way than your other assignments. Some of these steps include topic exploration, initial exploratory research, a research proposal, an annotated bibliography, an outline of the conversation on your topic, and a final draft that articulates your contribution to this conversation.

Unit IV: Creating a Conversation through Blogs will allow you to explore writing in a digital context, requiring you to create an audience for your writing by creating and writing for a blog. Because there are so many blogs in the world, each one has its own particular angle on a given topic, and often that angle has a lot to do with the author's unique voice or point of view. Blogs engage in a "conversation," similar to your unit 3 research, in two ways: first, by interacting with (and linking to) other ideas on the internet; and second, by soliciting comments from readers. You will be assigned to a group of five, and it will be your goal to create an idea for a blog that features your own unique perspective. You will then create a series of posts for your blog that not only have a strong sense of your voice as a writer, but also create a conversation by discussing and linking to other online sources. You will comment on each other's blogs to keep this conversation going. You will also design the visual elements of your blog, so that the look of it speaks to your overall theme and is appealing to potential readers. Blogging is a faster and much less polished form of writing than the other kinds of writing that we've done this semester. Blog readers expect frequently updated content, or they won't return to the site. Because the number of clicks and pageviews determines a blog's revenue (\$\$\$), bloggers are under pressure to post A LOT. So in order for you to experience the same constraints that other bloggers face, you'll be required to post a significant amount of writing in a short amount of time. In total you will write: 1 group post, 2 long posts (1.5-2 pages), 9 short posts (a picture with a sentence or two, or as much as a paragraph), and 6 comments.

Lastly, we will conclude with **Unit V: Writer's Statement**, which consists of a final reflection essay analyzing how your writing has developed in this course for the audience of your choice. You have the opportunity to reflect back on all you have accomplished this semester and share it with an audience; it's up to you to decide who would care about what you've learned, and how you're going to share it with them. In the past I've had students write: a letter to me to demonstrate how much they've learned; a letter to my future students telling them what they can expect to learn in this class; a speech to high school seniors explaining what they can look forward to learning in college, and many others. Choose an audience, a genre, and a rhetorical goal that makes sense for you, but be sure that your choices enable you to pay close attention to the writing you've done in this class.

Process Writing & Portfolios

College Writing is based on the belief that writing is a process. In order to grow and develop as writers, we need to write, write, and then write some more. For each major essay, you will engage in a rigorous writing process:

- Generative writing, in which you explore early ideas
- An initial draft
- A substantially revised draft, based on feedback from self, peers, instructor, and others
- A further revised and copy-edited final draft
- Reflective writing about your writing processes and products

These steps are meant to help you focus on specific aspects of your writing and get relevant feedback at different points in the writing process. **Be sure to save every piece of writing!** For each unit, you'll create a portfolio that includes the final essay as well as generative writing, initial and revised drafts, and written feedback from your readers. At the end of the semester, you'll create a comprehensive portfolio with all of your writing from the course that will serve as the basis for your Writer's Statement.

When you're making substantial revisions to your work, it's easy to get confused about which draft is the most recent. You may also find yourself making major changes, but later wanting to incorporate material that you had previously cut. To best preserve your writing in all its stages, I would strongly recommend using a file naming protocol. Start with the date, then your last name, then the paper: **2015_09_15_Wayne_UnitOne**. Every time you make major changes to your paper, choose "save as" and update the date.

Writing Community Membership

Creating a community that enables us to grow and develop as writers depends on each of us fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another, and being receptive readers of one another's writing. As with any University class, students are expected to adhere to the guidelines for classroom behavior as stated in the "Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Respect" in the *Code of Student Conduct*. Writing community responsibilities also include the following:

- **Participation in class activities and discussion:** All students are expected to participate actively in class and to provide respectful responses to others' contributions. In order to facilitate your active participation in the class, cell phones and other electronic devices need to be turned off or silenced. Our writing community activities will include discussion among the entire class, small group exercises, and in-class independent writing. These activities are designed to help you write and reflect on your essay assignments.
- **Reading and reflection:** Being a prepared member of our writing community includes bringing required materials to class and actively reading the required texts. Reading texts by other writers, including your own classmates, will help you become aware of the options you have for developing, organizing, and presenting your ideas to others; in other words, you will learn to think like a writer. Reflection on your own writing will also help you identify your writing options. Throughout the writing process, you'll write short reflections about the choices you made and why you made them.
- **Peer response:** Learning to write means learning to be read by many others. Not only will I respond to your writing, but also our class will become a writing community in which you'll regularly give and get critical peer response. By giving constructive feedback, you'll learn to read like a writer. By listening carefully to others, you'll learn to make revisions that affect readers in ways you had hoped.
- **Conferences:** At least once during the semester, **you are required to meet individually with me for a required student-teacher conference.** This is a time for you to discuss more fully your writing and your progress in the course. It is up to you to schedule the conference; you should try to schedule it at a point in the drafting process when it would be most useful for you, and I would encourage you to meet with me earlier in the semester rather than later. I also encourage you to come to my scheduled office hours to discuss questions, concerns, and your writing in general. If you have a time conflict with my office hours and would like to meet, please see me to arrange an appointment.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance

Regular attendance in Englwrit 112 is required. If you need to be absent for a required athletic event, field trip, military obligation, or court appearance; if there is a death or serious illness in your family; if you experience an accident or serious illness; if you are absent because of religious observance; or if there is some other legitimate extenuating circumstance preventing you from attending, you will most likely be excused from class. But note that, in such cases, you are responsible for prior notification and/or subsequent documentation and for making up all missed work. For the University's policies on absences, go to <http://www.umass.edu/registrar/students/policies-and-practices/class-absence-policy>.

For “unexcused” absences, in which you miss class for some ordinary reason—e.g., a cold or headache, a pressing deadline in another course, a missed flight or bus back to campus—the Writing Program allows **two absences** without penalty for TTh classes; again, you are responsible for making up all work. If you miss more than that, your final grade may be lowered: for TTh, up to one-half a letter grade each for the third and fourth unexcused absences and up to three-quarters of a letter grade for each absence after that. Missing a scheduled conference or coming to class excessively/frequently late may result in grade penalties as well. Note that absences may also impact the quality and completeness of your unit portfolios--and thus, may affect the grade that you'll earn for these portfolios. Finally, students who miss more than seven classes on a TTh, without good reason, *cannot* in most cases pass this course.

Plagiarism

When using ideas, words, and short passages from other people's writing in your own writing, you are *required to acknowledge the source*. Failure to acknowledge the contribution of others is considered plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Please read the Writing Program's statement about plagiarism in the opening pages of *The Penguin Handbook*, which contains additional information and advice. Suspect papers (e.g., those without drafts or works cited pages, papers which make large departures in style from your other work) may be submitted to the electronic plagiarism detection service Turnitin.com as part of the grading process. For the University's Academic Honesty Policy, see <http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty.php?q=honesty>.

Late Work

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late. You must contact me at least 48 hours before a deadline with good reason to receive an extension.

RESOURCES

Best Text Contest and Student Writing Anthology

Your writing for this course can reach a wider audience than just the people in this class. There are opportunities for your work to be recognized in the Writing Program's annual Best Text Contest, exhibited at our annual Celebration of Writing, and published in our annual *Student Writing Anthology*. Information about the Contest, Celebration, and *Anthology* can be found at <http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/>.

The Writing Center

As a UMass Amherst student, you have access to *free* one-on-one writing support from our campus Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library. Trained tutors work with writers in 45-minute sessions to brainstorm, structure a piece of writing, learn strategies for copyediting, and more. All student writers—whether you love writing, struggle with writing, are mystified by writing, or all of the above—are welcome. And remember that you can keep using the Writing Center even after you've taken *College Writing*. You can make an appointment online (<https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>; strongly encouraged!), or you can simply walk in and see if a tutor is available. Make sure that you bring your assignment, notes, and/or draft.

Office of Disability Services

The Writing Program is committed to making our courses accessible to all students. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Services (www.umass.edu/disability/current.html), and, at the start of the semester, do meet with me about tailoring accommodations identified by ODS to your work in this course.

GRADES AND DUE DATES

Final Grade

Your final grade for the semester will be based on the following breakdown, numerical equivalents and general definitions:

Unit Portfolios I-IV	80%	Unit I	40 points
		Unit II	40 points
		Unit III	40 points
		Unit IV	40 points
Unit V: Final reflection essay	10%	Final reflection essay	20 points
Writing Community Membership	10%	Active participation	10 points
		Class activities	10 points
Total	100%	Total	200 points

Due Dates For Major Assignments

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
Initial draft	9/17	10/8	11/3	12/1	12/10
Revised draft	9/24	10/20	11/12	12/3	12/15
Copyedited draft in portfolio	10/1	10/22	11/19	12/8	12/17 Submitted on Moodle by 11:00pm