

Writing 101

Course Syllabus

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Prerequisite: Passing grade in English I

Materials: Whatever you need for this class, in terms of assignments and readings, will be shared online or handed out in hard copy. Because most are shared online, you will need your iPad every time this class meets. You will also need access (outside of school) to the Internet.

At the end of this semester, you should be a better writer than you are now.

To get better, you'll have to write. On an evaluation for this class one year, a student complained that there was "too much writing" (probably the same student who said there was "too much singing" in choir). Funny. Seriously, though, this is a *writing* class. You should expect to write. A lot. Expect to write in class and at home, sometimes briefly and other times at length, sometimes formally and other times not. Expect to rewrite and revise, share some of your writing with others, be coached along the way and eventually evaluated.

OK, you probably guessed that I would ask you to write. You're curious (I hope) about specifics, so I'll give you some:

- You will learn that all types of writing go through a similar process. You should become familiar with that process, exploit it more fully, own it.
- You will try your hand at several different kinds of writing: narrative, expository, poetic, funny, formal, persuasive.
- You will amass an arsenal of structures for writing, such as sequential, comparative, and associative.
- You will practice tending to the details of your style. You should strengthen your word choices, broaden your approach to sentence structure, tighten your language. And don't think that you're done learning about grammar. Grammar can make your writing better.
- You will become a researcher, able to find credible and effective material for your writing on the Internet and through more direct approaches, such as interviews.
- You will recognize and benefit from the link between writing and reading. You should expect to read in this class and to respond to your reading in many ways (some informal and some more academic).

Your writing in this class will grow out of our readings and discussions in class. Class time will

be used for reading, discussing what we read and think, writing informally about what we read, and working toward larger, more formal writing assignments. I will give some instruction about writing techniques that will help prepare you for those larger assignments.

Requirements and Grading

Informal Writing: Most class days, I will ask you to respond in some way to our reading or discussion, or I will have you try out a writing technique, or I might have you do some thinking on paper/on screen in preparation for a major writing assignment. I grade these informal writings based on completeness, not on writing quality. A complete response will usually be in the neighborhood of 150-200 words. 30% of grade

Quizzes: You are responsible for internalizing some information in this class. That information can include writing concepts or vocabulary that comes from our discussions. I will let you know when quizzes are coming and what they will cover. Most of these quizzes will be in a short-answer format. 20% of grade

Formal Writing: Two or three times per quarter, you will produce and revise a more extended piece of writing. Over the course of the semester, you have the chance to try narrative writing, creative writing, persuasive writing, research, a critical book review, and formats that go beyond text. You will always create a rough draft of these pieces, and I will give you feedback on that draft and credit for doing it. I will grade your final draft on a 20-point scale. Criteria will vary from one assignment to another (and I'll specify these in the written version of the assignment), but in general, this is how the grading works:

19-20 outstanding

17-18 good

15-16 fulfills assignment but with flaws

13-14 significant flaws

11-12 deeply flawed

10 or less: plagiarized, not responsive to assignment, or extremely brief

40% of grade

Portfolio: At the end of the semester, we will not have a semester final. Instead, you will turn in a portfolio. It will include a self-evaluation of your work over the semester, along with final versions of your best three pieces of writing for the semester. 10% of grade (or total?)

Once all these aspects of your grade are appropriately weighted, your overall percentage translates into a grade in the traditional way: 93-90-87-83....

Class Policies

Behavior: Respect should characterize our interaction in this class. We demonstrate respect by listening to each other and not criticizing each other in a personal manner. We should also show respect for the class itself by dressing in uniform, speaking appropriately (no profanity, racist or sexist comments, or personal put-downs), caring for the classroom, and staying on task. I should demonstrate respect for you by speaking courteously to you, keeping you informed of deadlines and expectations, and handling inappropriate behavior privately as much as possible.

Submitting work on time: You are responsible for all work assigned in this class, even if it was assigned or due while you were absent. You are responsible for finding out, from me or others, what happened while you were absent or what will be due when you return. Late work, unless you have an extraordinary excuse for its lateness, will be penalized by 10 percent. Also, a warning to extreme procrastinators: *I will not accept more than one major writing assignment from you during the final week of a quarter.*

Technology: Technology should help us learn, but it can also interfere with learning. You will need your iPad in class regularly. I expect you to use it for writing (sometimes) and research. Remember, though, that the Internet can also tempt us to cheat, which interferes with learning. Cheating can cost you dearly (see Academic honesty). Technology can also disrupt class. For that reason, *please only use iPads when I specifically ask you to do something with them.* I should not see or hear cell phones unless I give you permission to use them for a specific purpose.

Academic honesty: Unless I assign a cooperative project, I expect you to complete your own work. If I suspect that all or a significant part of some work you submit comes from another (unacknowledged) source, published or not, I will ask you to provide evidence of your process in completing the assignment. If you cannot do so, I will consult professional colleagues. If we are convinced that you have plagiarized (stolen words from another source), you will receive no points for that assignment, and I will forward your case to school administration for further disciplinary action.

Alternative learning: WWVA has an alternative learning program. If you have a learning style or learning disability that poses a major obstacle for you in completing the work for this course or following the procedures in this class, you and I can work with the Alternative Learning Center to design a program more appropriate to your needs.

Big picture: I will work to keep us on track in this class, but I am usually willing to stray temporarily from my plans if you have sincere questions about spirituality or the future (colleges and careers). We do have a job to do in this class, but your well-being, present and future, is my highest purpose. If you too can stay focused on the work of this class, without losing sight of our larger purpose here, we will have an excellent semester.