

COM300: Written Communication

Fall 2011 (August 29 – December 09)

Instructor: Amanda Lohiser

Cell Phone: 716-983-2272 (9A-9PM)

Email: lohiser@ub-alumni.org

Classroom: Clemens 119

Office location: Basement of Baldy Hall

Office number: 8M

Mailbox: Baldy 356 – the copyroom

Class time: MWF 8:00-8:50AM*

Introduction

Welcome to COM300 or, as I like to call it, Writing Boot Camp. Don't worry – while we will be doing a lot of writing in this class (obviously), you're going to have a lot of autonomy over the topics you choose and how you choose to frame them. We'll also keep things light and interesting. It is, after all, unbelievably early in the morning.

Watch for the cast of *Whose Line is it Anyway?* to make an appearance (in cardboard cut-out form – I couldn't get them to actually come in), copious references to Monty Python as well as a textbook composed entirely of comics. See? I told you it wouldn't be horrible.

In this course we will work on such topics as:

- ★ Finding and narrowing topics
- ★ Writing thesis statements
- ★ Formulating clear and effective organizations
- ★ Developing paragraphs
- ★ Arguing (in the constructive, academic sense, not the “break a chair over someone's head” sense)
- ★ Integrating outside research
- ★ Revising drafts to a polished form
- ★ Grammar, syntax and other issues may be treated on an as-needed basis

The writing you will do in this class will be expository (fancy term for “based on thesis and proof”).

You may find that this course is very much like the other writing courses you have taken, such as Writing 101-102, or Advanced Writing 201. This course may differ from others you have taken inasmuch as there will be a strong focus on the connection between writing, thinking and your ability to communicate ideas about the issues and problems that are interesting *to you*.

Emphasis will also be placed on practicing – in and out of class – integrating the thinking process with the writing process – that is, thinking about thinking about writing (that's not a typo). Metacognition and its end result – thesis-based, logical, analytical, deductively-organized writing, is the ultimate goal of this class.

We will reach metacognition together through critical thinking. The topic about which you will be writing can be seen as a problem, and the writing process itself can be seen as a problem-solving process. Each draft of a paper brings you further through the problem-solving process and closer to a solution – your final draft.

* Yes. That's the actual time. You're not dreaming. That's the bad news. The good news is that it's only a 50 minute class. Afterwards, you can go home and go back to bed or get a good start on your day. With that in mind, it's extremely important that everyone arrives on time. If you're 10 minutes late, you've already missed nearly a quarter of the class and material – and most likely the instructions for how to complete your assignments and get a good grade. So, please be on time.

Course Content

Major Assignments: You will be asked to complete three portfolio set assignments. Portfolio sets consist of several written assignments, including short in-class writing, homework assignments and longer papers. *If you write it for this class, it will be included in your portfolio for a final grade!* Therefore, it is your responsibility to save ALL of your written works from this class.

Portfolios: You will need to purchase the following supplies to create your portfolio:

- ★ A **½ inch 3-ring binder** – any color, design or brand, as long as it is ½ inch!
- ★ **3 tabbed dividers** (binder-punched and with tabs that stick out. No homemade varieties, please.)

Class Exercises

Class exercises are often assigned on an as-needed basis or may be spur-of-the-moment due to a particular line of discussion. *Don't miss class.* Just because an in-class assignment is not listed on the syllabus doesn't mean it won't be counted in your portfolio. The in-class writing cannot be made up if missed.

Grading Percentages

This class is unique inasmuch as it uses a grade point grading system (e.g. B- = 2.7) for your portfolio assignments. Grades will be available to you on the Gradebook Feature on UBLearn. To assure comprehensive grading, I will use a rubric to arrive at the final grades you receive on your portfolios. This rubric will be discussed in class.

<u>Portfolio Set #1</u>	20%
Three short papers	
Miscellaneous	
<u>Portfolio Set #2</u>	30%
iSearch	
Annotated bibliography	
5-7 page paper	
Miscellaneous	
<u>Portfolio Set #3</u>	30%
iSearch	
Annotated bibliography	
Literature review	
7-9 page paper	
<u>Portfolio revision</u>	10%
<u>Productive participation</u>	10%

Portfolio Policies and Procedures

- ★ Each portfolio set takes about a week and a half to evaluate and grade. Late work will take longer.
- ★ All papers requiring proper formatting **MUST** be in APA, and papers requiring a References page *will fail* if they do not include one.
- ★ **Your papers' pages must be stapled together, please.**
- ★ You must submit *final* versions of every paper required for the portfolio in order to receive a passing grade in the course.
- ★ Mechanics (e.g. grammar, syntax, spelling,) will receive deductions on a cumulative basis. This course assumes that you already are competent in these areas, meaning you can recognize and fix your own writing errors. However, we will use class time to study these issues if a sufficient number of student papers demonstrate the need. Otherwise, there is help available with me outside of class or at the Writing Lab.
- ★ **Unless otherwise indicated, papers must be turned in as hard copy, in your portfolio, in class. They should not be turned in individually or online.**

Late assignments

You are expected to not only be in class but to also make appropriate contributions to class discussion. Active participation will be figured into your final grade for the course. Missed classes cannot be “covered” by reading the text and borrowing class notes. Excused make-ups of in-class assignments will be granted only when the reason for the absence can be documented in writing. This policy is meant to ensure fairness to all students.

It is your responsibility to follow through to get assignments and materials missed due to excused absences. Any assignments emailed to me must also be turned in as a hard copy. If they were previously emailed (to indicate that they were turned in on time), please staple a printed copy of the email (containing my reply) to the assignment. This ensures that no points are taken off of your assignment for lateness.

Assignment formatting

All assignments *must* be typed and presented in Times New Roman font, sized 12 point, double space, with 1 inch document margins. Assignments not presented in this format will be returned for resubmission *by the next class period* and the grade will be reduced by 25%. There are two reasons that I will be firm on this:

- ★ As I will be reading your assignments and outlines for hours on end, requesting one standard font eliminates subjective interpretations of what some people consider artistic and what others consider illegible.
- ★ Protocol and adherence to rules will be required of you everywhere you go. It is an important life skill to learn how to follow directions and still maintain your own identity through various modes of expression.

More about Grading

I will not be collecting your individual papers, correcting them, grading them, and handing them back in the traditional method. Although I will be discussing the grading procedure with you later on in class, please understand that the grading of portfolio sets is holistic – i.e. you receive one overall grade for the content of each portfolio set.

Books

- ★ **REQUIRED:** The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers by Jane E. Aaron
- ★ **RECOMMENDED:** The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. & E. B. White

The full text of the Strunk & White book is available online free of charge at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>. The book itself is small and portable; some of you may be content with the online version, others may want to purchase the book.

You can find both of these books at the UB bookstore. I also would recommend shopping around on sites such as Amazon.com and eCampus.com.

- ★ Additional readings will be handed out in class. Rather than asking you to purchase multiple books, I have hand-selected key chapters and excerpts from other texts and will be sharing them with you in class. Please respect the fact that when you are given a photo-copied hand-out in class, that it is to be treated as a required reading. Please don't let trees die in vain!

Other Policies and Requirements

Attendance: You must be in class and you must be on time. If you arrive after attendance is taken, you may be marked absent for the day. **I reserve the right to fail any student who misses six or more classes without an excellent and verifiable excuse.**

Food: Due to the early hours of this class, I will permit eating during class time. Please be respectful of other students and bring food that will not be disruptive to the learning environment (consider both sounds AND smells please). Of course, beverages are allowed throughout the class time.

Etiquette: *Please turn cell phones off before coming to class.* While laptops are welcomed in the classroom as note-taking and writing devices, using them to watch YouTube, update your Facebook status, instant message, read email or play Angry Birds is *not* welcomed.

Also along these lines, sleeping, carrying on private conversations, reading outside materials etc., is noticed by me and by your classmates. This behavior is disrespectful, disruptive, reflects poorly on you and will definitely affect your grade. Likewise, enthusiastic, well-intentioned and relevant participation keeps the class interesting and moving, and consequently is rewarded.

Classroom condition: Please practice carry-in/carry-out when you are in the classroom – it is my request that we leave the room each morning in the condition in which we found it.

Respect: **Although you can expect some lively discussion in this class, students are expected to respect gender, sexual identity, race, religion, and other similarities and differences.**

Class participation: Please be prepared to share your writing with others.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism often occurs and students are regularly caught. Copying the work (in whole or in part), or borrowing the ideas of others without attribution, is a serious offense and will cause you to fail a paper and possibly this class. If you are not sure whether you are leaning too heavily on someone else's ideas and/or words then it is your responsibility to check with me before you submit the work as your own.

Resources: The campus has a Writing Center (no appointment necessary – 2nd floor of Baldy). For issues outside of writing (study skills, counseling, special services, financial aid), the campus is equipped with many student support services. I am happy to refer you to any of these, especially if you suspect that you have a disability – physical, learning, social – which might impede your progress in the class. Do not procrastinate in seeking out help! There is plenty of help available.

Calendar of Activities (subject to change at the instructor's discretion and based on the needs of the students.)

	DATE	CLASS CONTENT	DUE DATES
1	M 08/29	Lecture: Class introduction/syllabus	
	W 08/31	Lecture: How letter grades are assigned / Student intros	
	F 09/02	Activity: Fix the horrible essay ①	
2	M 09/05	<i>Labor Day: No class</i>	
	W 09/07	Activity: Discuss article "Students are ill-prepared for college-level writing"	
	F 09/09	Activity: 100 Characters to 100 Words ①	Rough draft due F 09/16
3	M 09/12	Lecture: Politics of grammar and usage	
	W 09/14	Lecture: Sentence Mechanics	
	F 09/16	Activity: Descriptive paragraphs ①	
4	M 09/19	Activity: Find & discuss botched grammar in the real world ①	Rough draft due M 09/26
	W 09/21	Lecture: Philosophy of error / Grammar Q&A	
	F 09/23	Lecture: Starting point of the composing process	
5	M 09/26	Lecture: Intellectual qualities of the critical thinker/writer	
	W 09/28	Activity: Three intellectual properties ①	Rough draft due W 10/05
	F 09/30	Lecture: Thesis statements and topic sentences	
6	M 10/03	Activity: Thesis statement and outline from <u>The Cartoon Guide</u> ①	
	W 10/05	Activity: Final exam questions ①	
7	F 10/07	Lecture: Introduce iSearch, Paper 1 ②	Rough draft due F 10/28
	M 10/10	<i>Class canceled</i>	
	W 10/12	Lecture: Annotated bibliography	PORTFOLIO #1 DUE
8	F 10/14	Activity: Frame paragraph " Facial expressions of emotion " essay ②	Rough draft due F 10/21
	M 10/17	Lecture: Argumentation – Deduction, Induction, Validity and Soundness	
	W 10/19	Activity: Validity and soundness of arguments in <u>Media Debates</u> ②	
9	F 10/21	Lecture: Argumentation: Logical Form	
	M 10/24	Activity: All A's are C's ②	
	W 10/26	Activity: Discuss "Is Language Logical" ②	
10	F 10/28	Activity: Make a logical argument ②	
	M 10/31	Creative writing workshop ②	
	W 11/02	Creative writing workshop ②	
11	F 11/04	Creative writing workshop ②	
	M 11/07	<i>Class canceled</i>	
	W 11/09	Lecture: All-About writing, Introduce Paper 2 ③	Rough draft due 11/30
12	F 11/11	Activity: New ideas for an all-about paper ③	PORTFOLIO #2 DUE
	M 11/14	Lecture: Three levels of revision	
	W 11/16	Lecture: Paragraphing	
13	F 11/18	CONFERENCES	
	M 11/21	CONFERENCES	
	W 11/23	<i>Thanksgiving Break: No class</i>	
14	F 11/25	<i>Thanksgiving Break: No class</i>	
	M 11/28	Lecture: Academic introductions	
	W 11/30	Activity: Academic intro exchange for Paper 2 ③	
15	F 12/02	Lecture: Academic titles	
	M 12/05	Activity: List of 5 titles ③	
	W 12/07	TURNING-IN DAY FESTIVAL	PORTFOLIO #3 DUE
	F 12/09	<i>No class – LAST CALL FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS</i>	