

English 333.001 (80469) Fall 2012

Advanced Writing: Non-Fiction

Professor Gerald Duchovnay

TH 11:00-12:15, HL 208

Office: Hall of Languages, 326

Office Hours: TH 10-11; 12:15-1:45, Thursday, 4:30-5:15. Other times by appointment and via email.

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Course Description: English 333, Advanced Writing: Non-Fiction (aka Advanced Composition) emphasizes the writing process as an activity that pertains to collaboration, analysis, and problem solving. During the semester, you will examine your own thinking and composing processes, the importance of audience, and how to apply strategies (heuristics) to the writing of essays and other texts. There will be occasional readings (often via handouts) that we will discuss as a group or in small groups, but the focus throughout the course will be on your writing. This section of English 333, with its emphasis on collaboration and your writing skills should have application to you no matter what your field of study or professional career plans may be.

The course will deal with such aspects of the writing process as discourse conventions (e.g., problems vs. situations, analysis vs. narration), and rhetorical theory (e.g., audience and rhetorical situations). As we progress during the semester, we will see how writing is a process that usually ends in a product, but is never really finished. Every one of us, no matter how accomplished, can write better if we pay attention to the process and continue to work at revising. But at some point, usually a deadline, we, as writers, must submit a text.

In previous semesters, as a result of this or similar writing classes, students who I have taught have published editorials, letters to the editor, reviews, and articles (some even for money). Others have written up "texts" that have won them recognition at their schools, resulted in the implementation of changes on their campus, won them monetary prizes, or helped to get them into law or medical school. Most, however, were pleased to leave the class knowing and applying additional strategies for improving their writing.

Aspects of writing we will discuss and analyze include how to:

- generate ideas about a topic for the purpose of writing;
- develop the ability to organize, select, and relate ideas;
- vary your writing style for different readers and purposes
- improve your writing by revising for purpose;
- improve your writing by editing for style;
- collaborate with others to discuss and analyze writing.

Course Objectives:

- 1 To examine your thinking and writing processes and strategies to use in planning, writing, and revising;
- 2 To introduce you to rhetorical modes (*topoi*) and their use;

3. To develop ways to define and support a thesis;
4. To evaluate how various kinds of writing function in different discourse communities (e.g., academic and professional contexts);
5. To create texts in individual and collaborative environments;
6. To prepare for "real life" writing situations;
7. To create an environment in which you can discover what you know and what you need to know about a subject or writing strategies;

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate they can edit and revise their texts.
2. Students will demonstrate they can change texts in response to feedback from classmates and instructor.
3. Students will demonstrate they can use different rhetorical strategies for different audiences.

We hear frequently how out of shape we are. You might want to consider this class as a kind of workout:

- a) allowing for more endurance;
- b) allowing for varying types of exercises in writing
- c) working out the kinks and tightness in your writing;
- d) seeing how you or others may be able to clear a hurdle without knocking it over
- e) seeing and analyzing how one might work individually and collaboratively to improve your writing.

Evaluations: During the term your peers and I will read and comment on your writing in class or via email. Thus, you will be getting feedback from more than one source. Some of the comments about your writing will be questions, some will be suggestions for changes, and others may recommend extensive revisions. As we look over the papers, we will consider:

task completion--does the text do what was asked?
 presentation of ideas--original and persuasive thought, for a specific audience
 development and support of key ideas--in depth and appropriate to audience and rhetorical purpose
 organization--grouping of ideas under unifying concepts
 logic--analyzing incisively and insightfully
 style--express key ideas and examples in vivid prose
 mechanical/grammatical matters-- showing skill with basics

Keep in mind that evaluating writing is not a science. (We see the application of this evaluative process during the Olympics, *Dancing with the Stars*, and at other

competitive events.) While some teachers are known for taking off "x" number of points for misspelled words, comma splices and the like, the review and evaluation of writing is based on much more than mechanical matters, although mechanical matters do have their place.

I am often asked what it takes to please me, the instructor of this course. Another way of phrasing this is, "Tell me what you want." Some students are not interested in thinking or analyzing, and have little concern about what their peers have to say about their writing; instead, those students want to "please" the instructor in order to get a high grade. (The grade, rather than improved or enhanced writing and thinking skills, seems to be the goal for these students.) Presentations that do an outstanding job of handling the aspects enumerated above (staying on task, presentation of ideas, development and support of key ideas, organization, logic, style, and mechanical and grammatical correctness) are what I, and I imagine most other instructors and employers, prefer reading or seeing or hearing. While there is no rule on the number of drafts a writer produces before submission, I urge you to do a minimum of two drafts before you submit (third version) to me. Yes, this takes time; good writing takes time. Revision, as we will discuss in class, is not the same as editing. In some instances, students choose not to revise any of their papers, saying to themselves, and by extension, to me, "I am satisfied with what I have done and I choose not to improve this submission." That will be your option.

Examinations and Papers: There are no traditional examinations or tests *per se* in this course. Advanced Writing: Non-Fiction is writing intensive, with formal, semi-formal, and informal papers, brief essays, abstracts or summaries, and incremental writing assignments. The focus is on your writing. You will be asked to submit a variety of papers during the semester; during the semester you will have the opportunity to revise some of them. Given the nature of this class and the amount of writing you will be doing during the course, there will be no final examination, but there will be a final portfolio.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined by a portfolio of selected writings submitted to me near the end of the semester, a critical self-evaluation, and any short assignments or exercises I assign. Your written work will be weighted at approximately 90% of your final grade (80% for essays, 5-10% for brief assignments), with class participation (including group collaboration) counting for the remaining 10%. The percentage weight of each of the written assignments will be determined toward the end of the term, when we see exactly how many assignments will be required in your portfolio. It has been my tradition, to the frustration of some, that there are no formal grades on your essays. I may reconsider that as we progress during this semester, but early on (definitely for the first part of the course), there will be no formal grades on your submissions. In their place will be comments and checks or pluses (or variations of those markings). Those markings, my comments, and the comments of your peers should give you a sense of ways of improving your writing on a particular text. While a rare essay may not require revising, most of the students I have taught in this class understand, or come to understand, the importance of how revisions can improve their writing.

Attendance: You should try to not miss class. We will be discussing your writing, the assignments, and the readings. Class discussions cannot be duplicated, no matter how

thorough someone's notes might be, and if you are not in class when we workshop, you miss a substantive part of the class. Also, it can be difficult to try to understand what was said about particular essays from someone's notes.

In some quarters there is the notion that certain kinds of absences are excused and others are not. I consider any absence an absence--sleeping late, car trouble, a doctor's appointment, a family emergency, a university event, etc. Excessive absences (beyond three) will contribute to the lowering of your grade. Six absences--unless for extraordinary circumstances, appropriate notification to your instructor, and his evaluation of the circumstances--will result in your being dropped from the class. *It is my understanding that those who are dropped from class without having attended regularly and who are on financial aid may be required to repay their financial aid.*

Due Dates for Assignments: Papers are due on the assigned day. It is important that you have your work for the class that it is due. However, even if you have not completed the assignment, you should come to class. If you miss class, please contact a classmate (or me) to find out about what was covered. You are responsible for whatever was missed. By not being in class, even if you did not do the assignment, you will be impacting what you and others will learn from the commentary and analysis of that day.

Late Papers: Unless other deadlines have been worked out ahead of time with your instructor, because of the nature of this class (discussing your writing on a given day), late papers will be accepted, but all late papers are so noted, and thus a pattern of late papers will impact *substantially* your final grade.

Make-Up Policy: Except for extraordinary circumstances, there will be no make-ups for any in-class essays we may do. See me if you think yours is an extraordinary situation. If you know in advance that you will not be attending a particular class meeting for a legitimate reason, notify me prior to the missed class and I will make appropriate accommodations.

Textbook: Frank, Steven. *The Pen Commandments*. New York: Anchor, 2003.
ISBN: 1-4000-3229-6.

I have often taught this course without a textbook, but English 333 students encouraged me to use a book that would deal with issues we discuss, but not a grammar handbook. For that reason, I have ordered what I believe to be an "easy" read and relatively inexpensive book--Steven Frank's *The Pen Commandments*, which is abbreviated in the schedule below as *PC*.

Other suggested books for your own library include:

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*. 5th ed. New York: Longman, 2006.

Trimble, John R. *Writing with Style; Conversations on the Art of Writing*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, 2000.

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. Gotham, 2006.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 9th edition, or most recent edition. New York: Longman, 2006.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well, 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Collins, 2006.

There will be handouts and copies of your essays, and I may ask you to bring to class copies of downloaded articles for analysis and discussion. The total cost for such materials will be substantially less than the costs associated with purchasing a book with essays.

Other: You need to have one large binder to hold and keep organized the handouts and your essays. *Something as basic as an organized notebook will be an important tool during the semester.*

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]).

Our word plagiarism is derived from a word that means "to kidnap." Plagiarism is a form of kidnapping someone else's ideas, opinions, arguments, or research, and presenting them (it) as your own. Plagiarism "includes (but is not limited to) failure to indicate the source with quotation marks or footnotes or internal documentation where appropriate if any of the following are reproduced in the work submitted: 1. a phrase, written or musical; 2. a graphic element; 3. a proof; 4. specific language; 5. an idea derived from the work, published or unpublished, of another person or group.

Much of the confusion and unintentional dishonesty in undergraduate papers results from ignorance or carelessness with regard to attribution of sources. When you borrow from what others have said, you are obligated to acknowledge your sources. We all solicit opinions about our writing from family, friends, or colleagues. Your indebtedness to others for sharing substantive ideas with you about your papers or for reading and commenting on them can be indicated in an acknowledgements page accompanying each formal assignment. If you go beyond conversations with friends or colleagues to other outside sources, you need to acknowledge these sources in your paper and in a Works Cited section. If you are uncertain about your documentation, please see me before you submit the paper. Intentional plagiarism will result in a zero for the work and other appropriate disciplinary action.

Common Decency: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. You are requested to turn off your cell phones before entering the classroom. **Common courtesy says you do not receive or answer calls during class. And no text messaging, tweeting, or Facebook exchanges during class.** If you are expecting an emergency call, please let me know ahead of time, put your phone on vibrator mode, and sit close to the exit so you can leave discreetly to take the call.

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable

accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services / Texas A&M University-Commerce / Gee Library, Room 132 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148

The Writing Center. The Writing Center is dedicated to helping writers take advantage of all opportunities for learning related to the writing process; to that end, the Center can assist writers at any stage of the writing process. In addition to your instructor, this is the place to go for additional assistance with your reading and writing projects at TAMU-Commerce. The Center can help you with your papers and digital texts for your classes. The Center has two locations: (1) on the ground floor of the Hall of Languages (room 103), and (2) by the circulation desk in Gee Library. To schedule an appointment, come to HL 103 or call (903) 886-5280, or check out the hours at the Gee Library.

Teacher Certification: A number of you may be seeking certification to teach. *If you plan to seek certification in English, Spanish, Bilingual, an endorsement in ESL, or in other areas at TAMU-C, you should contact the appropriate certification advisor in your discipline by the beginning of your junior year, if not sooner.* If you plan to be certified or pursue Alternate Certification to teach in the public schools, you need to become familiar with all the details of the competencies and requirements as early as possible in your academic career. Read: NOW.

Schedule: Writing is a process, and the discussion of writing is a process. Unlike some courses, where you may move in a linear fashion, usually from one chapter to another or one topic to another, we will be recursive and collaborative in what we say and do. As a result, the readings in our text will be constant, but other matters may vary, based on our discussions and your commentary in class. Since there are no exams in this course, I hope this emphasis on flexibility does not pose a problem for any of you. On occasion, I will need to miss a class due to attendance at a professional meeting or conference. On those days we will arrange for in-class work, library or independent research, internet interaction, or a free day. Here is a tentative (and "tentative" is the operative word) schedule:

Week 1	Course Introduction
8/28	Looking vs. Seeing A: Writing About Writing
8/30	Why Write: Communication Paradigm Do You See What Others See? Is There a Writing-Process? Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 3-21 (Honor Thy Reader) Read for Next Time: "Take this Fish" + Handout

Week 2	
9/4	Does Audience Matter?

What is a thesis? / Why Abstracts?

Abstracts/Summaries/Responses

A: Listen to *A Way With Words* (NPR)

150 word response to *A Way with Words*

3 meaningful (to you) words/phrases

9/6 Discussion of *A Way with Words*
Describing / Showing vs. Telling
A: Read for next time: *PC*, 22-39 (Don't Waste Words)

Week 3

9/11 How Do Others Use Words? How Do they Organize?
A: Analysis--Newspaper/Magazine articles
Read for Next Time: *PC*, 307-312 (Grammar Concerns)

9/13 Considering Discourse Communities
Reviews --What makes a review?
Writing a review
Read for next time: *PC*, 40-71 (Don't Kill Sentences)

Week 4
9/18 Discussion of Reviews/Writing Styles/Audiences
What Would "X" Say?

9/20 Do You Belong on the Editorial Page?
Improving Campus Life
A: Arguing Your Cause
Read for next time: *PC*, 72-109 (Picking on Puncts)

Week 5

9/25 Nouns and Verbs
Expository v Argumentative Writing
Does the Publication or Receiver Matter?

9/27 Considering Adjectives
A: Using Verbs and Nouns
Read for next time: *PC*, 110-142 (Holy Structure)

Week 6
10/2 Describing --Who or What Are Those Desperate Housewives?
Analyzing / Showing / Telling --People

10/4 Abstract vs. Concrete: Does it Make a Difference?

Read for next time: *PC*, 143-182 (Expressing Oneself)

Week 7

10/9 So What is that Thing Called the *OED*?

10/11 Technical Writing (cont'd)
 Workshopping
 Read for next time: *PC*, 183-216 (Pleasure & Writing)

Week 8--

10/16 Style and Pulling Material Together
 New matters

10/18 Writing for Audiences
 Read for next time: *PC*, 216-243 (Essay Tests)

Week 9

10/23 Seeing on Campus--Being Recursive
 A: What Have We Missed?

10/25 Technical Writing: What Works? What Doesn't?

Week 10--

10/30 Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?

11/1 Cover Letters & Résumés
 Read for next time: *PC*, 244-272 (Writer's Block)

Week 11

11/6 Causal Analysis: Writing for a Purpose

11/8 Being General/Being Concise
 Read for next time: *PC*, 273-302 (Finding Your Voice)

Week 12 Can you say anything about an apple?

11/13 Making your writing come alive
 A: A very short assignment

11/15 How Would You Describe X?

Week 13 Reader-Based Prose

11/20 Looking at Language
 Ebony and Ivory and Apples and Oranges--Rhetorical Strategies

11/22 Thanksgiving--no class

Week 14

11/27 Workshopping/Review of Writing Process
 A: Putting it All Together

11/29 Point of View--is it important?
 Workshopping of one or two of your papers

Week 15

12/4

Portfolios Due

Course Evaluation Available on Line

12/6

TBA

Week 16

12/11

Final Exam Week

8/22/2012