

**English 333.001 (20427) Spring 2013**

**Advanced Writing: Non-Fiction**

Professor Gerald Duchovnay

TH 11:00-12:15, Hall of Languages 325

Office: Hall of Languages, 326

Office Hours: TH 10:15-11; 12:15-1:45

Tuesday, 4:30-5:00. Other times by appointment.

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**Course Description:** 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, cognition, and writing skills should have application to you no matter what your field of study or professional career plans may be. [Cognition is the act or process of knowing, including both awareness and judgment; cognitive studies are based on or are capable of being reduced to empirical knowledge.]

The course will deal with discourse conventions, such as analysis vs. narration, and rhetorical theory (e.g., audience and rhetorical situations). As we progress during the semester, we will examine how writing is a process that may end in a product (usually), 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.

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.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will demonstrate they can edit their texts for surface level features and stylistic infelicities.
2. Students will demonstrate they can revise texts by deleting irrelevant text, move text, and produce new text.
3. Students will demonstrate they can change texts in response to peer and instructor critiques.

By the end of this class, students are generally pleased in knowing how to apply strategies for improving their writing for diverse audiences.

**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 at each of the Olympics, and 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 concern for mechanical matters does have its place.

**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 you will be asked to submit a final portfolio, so it will be essential that you retain **ALL** copies of the work you have submitted.

**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 (85% for essays, 5% 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 third or first half 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 students 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. 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 or oral comments.

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 or may become ineligible for future 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 via email) 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. So, too, will non-submissions.

**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:** Steven Frank. *The Pen Commandments*. New York: Anchor/Random House, 2003. ISBN: 9781400032297.

Other suggested books that might be useful:

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 2006.

Trimble, John R. *Writing with Style; Conversations on the Art of Writing*. 3<sup>nd</sup>ed. Prentice Hall, 2010.

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

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 10<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Longman, 2010.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well, 30<sup>th</sup> 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. In addition, 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 in class.* I, too, will try to remember to turn off my cell phone. 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 is on the ground floor of the Hall of Languages (room 103), and maybe available on line or at the Gee Library. To schedule an appointment, come to HL 103 or call (903) 886-5280 to check out the hours or to see if there is on-line assistance available. DON'T, though, wait until the last minute to get assistance.

**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 must pass the required tests.* 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: ACT NOW.

**Schedule:** Writing is a process, and the discussion of writing is a process as well. 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 assignments 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. *Do follow, however, the assigned readings in The Pen Commandments, as per the syllabus.* 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 1/15	Course Introduction Looking vs. Seeing A: Letter About Writing
1/17	Do You See what Others See? Looking vs. Seeing / Describing vs. Analyzing Process of Writing--steps, heuristics, links, flow chart Read for next time: PC, 3-21 ("Honor Thy Reader")

Week 2	Discourse communities?
1/22	Objects of Importance: Choosing One and Explaining <b>A:</b> Something of Importance to You
1/24	Discussion of Abstracts and Essays Describing / Showing vs. Telling <b>A:</b> Words, Dictionaries, and Creativity Listen to & Comment on <i>Way with Words</i> Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 22-39 (Don't Waste Words)
Week 3	Analyzing Seeing on Campus--
Jan 29	How Do We Comment on Writing? <b>A:</b> Analysis--Newspaper/Magazine articles Read for Next Time: <i>PC</i> , 307-312 (Grammar Concerns)
Jan. 31	Reviews --What makes a review? Writing for Publication Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 40-71 (Don't Kill Sentences)
Week 4	Discussion of Reviews/Writing Styles/Audiences
2/5	What Would "X" Say?
2/7	Writing Resumes and Cover Letters Reviewing writing / Nouns and Verbs Suggestions for Improving Campus Life <b>A:</b> Cover Letter and Resume (revised--due Feb. 14) Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 72-109 (Picking on Puncts)
Week 5	Writing Letters to Editors/ Does the Publication or Receiver Matter?
2/12	Intriguing Abstractions
2/14	Resumes and Cover Letters <b>A:</b> So What Do You Mean by That? Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 110-142 (Holy Structure)
Week 6	Self Analysis of Writing: What is Involved?
2/19	Analyzing / Showing / Telling --People
2/21	Descriptions of People vs Analysis Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 143-182 (Expressing Oneself)
Week 7	Describing Inanimate Objects --What Works? What Doesn't?
2/26	Writing for Audiences
2/28	Abstract vs. Concrete: Does it Make a Difference? Workshopping Read for next time: <i>PC</i> , 183-216 (Pleasure & Writing)

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- Week 8            Can you say anything about an apple?  
 3/5            Making your writing come alive  
                   A: A very short assignment
- 3/7            TBA  
                   Read for next time: *PC*, 216-243 (Essay Tests)

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Week 9 No Classes ---Spring Break  
 3/12 & 3/14

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- Week 10          Technical Writing--How is it Different?  
 3/19            Technical Writing—Continued
- 3/21            Issues of Concern  
                   A: Writing for Publication Revisited  
                   Read for next time: *PC*, 244-272 (Writer's Block)

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- Week 11 --
- 3/26            New Matters  
                   Evaluating isolated paragraphs
- 3/28            Being General/Being Concise  
                   Read for next time: *PC*, 273-302 (Finding Your Voice)

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- Week 12
- 4/2            Style and Pulling Material Together  
                   New matters
- 4/4            Why Did that Happen? Examining Causation
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- Week 13          Reader-Based Prose  
 4/9            Looking at Language  
 4/11            Ebony and Ivory and Apples and Oranges--Rhetorical Strategies
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- Week 14
- 4/16            Workshopping/Review of Writing Process  
                   A: Synthesizing What Came Before
- 4/18            Tone / Audience/ More Approaches to Evaluating Writing
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- Week 15
- 4/23            Point of View--is it important?  
                   Evaluating Writing

4/25      Workshopping (one or two of your essays) and Putting it all Together  
Course Evaluation (available on-line)  
A: Looking at Your Writing/Portfolio (Reprise)

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Week 16

4/30      Portfolio Due-- All materials will be due today

5/2      Tying it all together

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Week 17      Final Examination Week -- No class meetings

1/2013