

ENG 101 - College Composition - Course Syllabus

Section 0990 – Summer 2012 – Online

Instructor

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Office Hours: by appt.

Course description/objectives

ENG 101 is designed to give students an introduction to college level writing. The course focuses on argumentative writing and writing from text. Students will work on analyzing subject matter, forming arguments, and supporting those arguments with solid evidence from the text in a well structured, clearly written academic essay.

Required Texts

Jack the Ripper: The Definitive History, Paul Begg

Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper, Case Closed, Patricia Cornwell

Rules for Writers, Diana Hacker

Supplemental texts on FirstClass and on the Casebook.org website

Technology Requirements

As an online course, there are certain minimum technological requirements that each student must have in order to successfully complete the course. ***By registering for this course, the student is acknowledging that he or she has (or has access to) these things, and will have that access for the entirety of the course. Computer trouble in mid-course is not a valid excuse for failure to hand in assignments, for example. It is the student's responsibility to find alternate means to do so (public clusters, etc.).***

- A computer (or access to a computer) with internet access
- A working FirstClass email account (*If you do not have a username or password to access the FirstClass system, please go to <http://www.umaine.edu/firstclass> and use your MaineStreet username and password to activate your FirstClass account. If you have any issues, contact the IT Help Center at 207-581-2506.*)
 - If you haven't already, you should also download and install the FirstClass software to your computer. You may do so at the following address: <http://www.umaine.edu/it/software/firstclass/>. While it is possible to access FirstClass through the internet, there are sometimes issues in using the various conferences when using the internet login. Downloading and using the FirstClass software will prevent this.
- Some version of word processing software. (MS Word would be preferred, but is not required. Most software will have the ability to read and save as .doc files). A free word processing program is available at OpenOffice.org.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. The primary coursework consists of a total of five essays, four of those being 3+ pages and the fifth being 5+ pages. In addition, the first two essays of the semester will also require a rough draft for comment and revision (with an optional revision for the third essay).
2. A series of short assignments to help with the analysis of the material and with building your essays.
3. Successful completion of the ENG 101 program's portfolio requirement

Portfolios

The focus of our course is to prepare you for the portfolio process at the end of the semester. ENG 101 is more than about simply writing within the confines of our particular class, but is about being able to write effectively to a broader audience (and one that might not be familiar with your subject matter). As such, the final assessment of your success within ENG 101 is not done by me as your instructor, but through a process where your strongest work is evaluated by instructors of ENG 101 other than myself in accordance with a previously established grading rubric (the last page of this syllabus). More information will be given on the specifics of the portfolio process as the course progresses.

Grading

Since the portfolio is the main focus of the course, the results of that process are central to your grade within the course. Passing the portfolio is a requirement for successfully meeting the ENG 101 requirement at the University. And since the course is a University-wide requirement, you must have at least a C average or better in the class.

The way that grading will work in this class is that passing the portfolio will give you a base grade of a C (a 2.0, or "half" of the potential grade for the course), with "adequate" completion of the assignments during the course (including essay drafts, and shorter preparatory assignments) and class attendance either adding to or subtracting from that. The breakdown of the grades is as follows:

- Passing the portfolio: 2.0
- Essay drafts (7 mandatory): +/- 1.25
- Short assignments: +/- .25
- Class discussions +/- .5

So passing the portfolio and adequately completing all the work can add up to a 4.0 in the course. But it should be noted that simply passing the portfolio is not enough. It is possible to pass the portfolio but receive a C- or below if enough of the other course requirements are not met. More importantly, failure to adequately attend the course or failure to hand in a sufficient number of the assignments means you will not be eligible to hand in a portfolio.

"Adequate" completion of assignments

Each of the assignments for the course (essay drafts and short assignments) can receive a "grade" anywhere within the ranges listed above. Those grades are not based upon the "quality" of the work, but for adequate completion. Whether completion is "adequate" will depend on various factors based on the type of assignment, such as handing in assignments "on time;" meeting general length requirements; writing to topic; doing meaningful revisions; including works cited and making adequate in-text citations, etc. Basically, meeting the stated requirements of the individual assignments means that it has been "adequately completed."

- While grades are not based upon quality (an essay can receive a maximum 1.5 but still fail to meet the standards of the rubric), I will always give you extensive feedback on your assignments and will let you know where I judge it based upon the portfolio rubric. My job is to get you ready for the rubric so that you can earn that half of the grade. The effort that you put into the course earns you the other half.

Eligibility for submitting a portfolio

As stated above, while the central focus of the course is about passing the portfolio, the course is about much more than just submitting and passing that end of the semester assessment. *Failure to hand in a significant portion of the semester assignments means that a student will not be allowed to hand in a portfolio at the end of the semester and therefore cannot meet the ENG 101 requirement.* Specifically, this means:

- Missing more than 25% of the discussion posts and short assignments
- or*
- Missing more than 2 of the 7 mandatory essay drafts

Portfolio Failure

Since the main assessment for the course is the final portfolio, all students must understand that passing it is required in order to pass the course with a C or better. Even if a student hands in every assignment, the true goal is to be showing evidence in your writing that you are meeting the minimum standards for ENG 101 as set forth in the rubric. If a student fails the portfolio, the highest final grade that student can receive for the course is a C-.

Assignment Due Dates (The Course Calendar)

Even though this is an online course, we are still working from a fixed schedule. All assignments are due on time by the date listed in the calendar in the course conference. *Note that the assignments are posted on the calendar on the date due. Make sure to be looking ahead in the calendar for upcoming assignments.*

All assignment are due by midnight at the end of the day of the due date posted in the course calendar.

Since this is an online course, the burden of responsibility for this is more on you than in a traditional class. In other words, I won't be constantly prodding you each class to remember that certain assignments are coming due. Since we will never interact face to face, it is critical that you stay on top of your assignments and turn them in on time. Obviously, reaction/response posts will not be useful in the class discussion if they are not posted when the entire class is dealing with the subject and will either be downgraded or not given credit depending upon the lateness of the posts. Papers handed in late may be downgraded *and late rough drafts will lose the opportunity for revision.* Any assignments more than a week past the due date will be considered "missed" and will not be accepted without a valid reason. *If a student requires an extension on a particular assignment, arrangements must be made with me for the extension prior to the due date.*

Submitting assignments through FirstClass

Obviously, all assignments for the course will be submitted electronically. Locations have been set up for each student to do this. In the main course conference you will see an icon labeled “Student Folders.” In this area you will find a list of individual folders, one for each student (*if you do not find a folder with your name in this area, or if you are unable to access it, email me as soon as possible*). These folders are private and only accessible to me and to the individual student. All assignments (except for reactions and responses which will be posted in the discussion areas set up for each unit) should be handed in to these individual folders.

To post a message or to submit an assignment to your personal folder, simply open the folder and create a new message. It will automatically address itself to the folder.

All assignments must come in as attached files. That allows me to grade them in MSWord with its comment feature. Assignments will be returned to you the same way. I also require that, as a backup for the essays, ***you copy and paste the text of the essay into the message window***, just in case there is something wrong with the attached file. This should only be considered a “backup,” however, since your original formatting won’t always come through correctly in this form. So to repeat, both an attached file and the text of the assignment in the message window.

If there is a problem with the file that prevents me from opening it, and the student has not included a copy/pasted backup, then the assignment will be considered as “late.” A “corrupted” file is not an automatic extension, in other words.

Finally, I ask that you name your attached files in a specific way, for ease of handling on my end. All attached file names should consist of the student’s last name, followed by the assignment name (i.e. Smith Essay 1.doc).

Formatting your papers

All papers must be typed and double-spaced in a 12 pt. typewriter-style font such as Times New Roman. Pages should be numbered and the student’s name, course designator (ENG 101), section number, my name, and due date should appear as a header in the top right corner of the first page. All pages after that should have the student’s last name, followed by the page number. Papers should also be spell-checked and proofread. *For more information on formatting of essays, see the “Paper formatting and submission guidelines” document in the “General Course Materials” folder.*

Portfolios

As part of the oversight of the ENG 101 program, at the end of the course, all students are required to hand in a portfolio made up of two papers from the course, and a reflective introduction, to be evaluated by readers other than myself and must be found to meet a minimum level of quality based upon a specific portfolio grading rubric. *For more information, see the “Portfolios” document in the “General Course Materials” folder.*

Academic honesty (plagiarism, etc.)

Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University. ***Note that submitting papers electronically makes it extremely easy to find cases of plagiarism. It's not worth the risk.***

Reaction and Responses

A significant portion of the course will take place in discussions, and all students are required to participate in these discussions. Each student needs to post a series of short reaction papers for the various subjects we are using for the essays. There will be a discussion area set aside for each unit (Essay #1, #2, etc.) within the folder for that particular essay. Each student is also required to read the reactions of the other students and post a minimum of 2 meaningful responses.

The discussions will deal primarily with the subject matter from the reading assignment for each unit, but may also deal with the focused issues that come up in the essay questions themselves. For example, instead of talking in general about the readings about one of the suspects, you might talk about his motive, or his opportunity, etc. In other words, the specifics from the readings that apply to the argument you would be making in the essay.

The reactions are not meant to be formal essays (with intros and conclusions, etc.), and will not be graded that way, but they should be readable, spellchecked, and proofread. ***They are mainly graded on completion (downgraded if they are excessively short), and for being on time.*** If you do the required work, and post on time, there is no reason for this part of the course to be anything less than an A.

In order for this to really be a class “discussion,” ***there will be specific due dates*** for each set of reactions and responses. That way we will all be focused on the material at roughly the same time. Because of this, it is critical that students are posting on time. It doesn't add to the discussion, for example, if you try to make up a missed post several weeks late when everyone else has moved on to new material. ***Late posts for reactions and responses will be downgraded, and excessively late posts will not receive credit.***

Reaction requirements

For the initial reaction papers, about 200-250 words is a good minimum length (that's roughly one page, typed, double-spaced), but more is okay, and is encouraged. The purpose is to discuss the material and begin to work on the analysis that is necessary in order for you to write your formal essays. In a traditional class, this would happen through in-class discussion. The reactions (and your responses—see below) are

meant to replace that. *So it is best not to think of this as simply a minimum requirement to be met, but as an opportunity to develop the essays you will be writing.*

There is no single correct way to do a reaction. It may take any number of forms.

- You might have some insight or point you wish to make about the material.
- You might see something interesting that you want to share with the rest of us.
- There might be something you just didn't get.
 - The reactions are a perfect place to ask questions.

The main thing, regardless of your approach, is to *be specific*. Really explain your comment or question (and if, in the course of explaining your question in detail, you manage to write your way to an answer, that's great). Make references to the readings, etc.

Basically, what we're looking for is a short piece of writing that shows that you have read/viewed the work, and that you have begun to think about it a little more deeply and are offering something in your reaction paper that will help to get the rest of us thinking as well. My hope is that the reaction papers will give us a jumping off point for the discussions that will then grow in the responses.

Response requirements

As mentioned earlier, for each discussion, students are required to post a minimum of two separate responses anywhere in the discussions. The main thing to keep in mind here is that *you need to be responding meaningfully*. To help with this, the responses should be at least 100 words each (that's less than ½ of a page if it were typed and double spaced) and should add to the discussion of the material in some way. *In other words, responding to someone by saying, "Wow, that's really interesting," isn't enough.* It's nice to give positive feedback to each other, but you need to do more than that for it to count as meaningful. Be specific and try to take the discussion further. Add new points. Ask additional questions. Etc.

Due dates

Make sure you are paying careful attention to the due dates. *There will be a specific date listed by which the Reaction Papers are due, and a second date by which you should have posted your responses.* Generally the responses will be due a couple of days after the reactions so that everyone has the time to read through them all. Obviously, you can always hand things in early. The dates are not the dates the assignments are due "on." They are when the assignments are due "by."

So to recap:

For each unit, you will have three short pieces of writing due by particular dates. A 250 word reaction paper, and two short (100+) word responses to each other. Completing these successfully and completing them on time can give your overall class average a nice boost since this accounts for 20% of your final grade (reaction papers are 10% and the responses are the other 10%). Of course, ignoring it is a good way to sink your average as well. *It is difficult to pass the course without also*

taking part in the reaction/response process and a zero for this section of the course will make it extremely difficult to get the required C for the course.

Reading each other's posts—IMPORTANT

The point of the discussion area is *not* just to post your own writing. You are also supposed to be reading each other's posts. Don't stop as soon as you have found the reactions you want to post your responses to.

- ***This is where much of the course actually happens.***
 - While there is material elsewhere about the writing process, a lot of the analysis of the subject matter about which you will be writing is done here
 - If you don't read the posts, you miss out on the analysis. I will be reading your essays with the assumption that you have read through the discussion area in full. So if you make a basic mistake with the interpretation of some fact in your essay and it was something that was discussed in the reactions/responses, then it is something that could have been avoided.
- I will also be posting heavily. Once students have posted their reactions and responses, I will weigh in heavily. At that point, you should definitely read what I have posted ***throughout the whole discussion area***, and not just in response to something you wrote. That would be like listening to an answer to something you asked in class and then plugging your ears when I talked to the other students. Not the best approach to a class.

Special Needs

While it may not be a significant issue in an online course like this one, students with disabilities who may need services or accommodations to fully participate in this class should contact Ann Smith, Director of Disability Support Services in 121 East Annex, (voice) 581-2319, (TTY) 581-2325, as early as possible in the course.

I also strongly encourage you to contact me personally to let me know of any special issues that I should be aware of to make the class a successful one for you. I am very open and willing to accommodate any legitimate special needs, but I can only do that if you talk to me about it. Anything you tell me will be kept strictly confidential.

One final important point:

I can't help you if I don't know you are having a problem. I can't answer a question if you never ask it. As a teacher, nothing frustrates me more than for an entire course to go by and to only find out at the end that a student didn't understand something, or that my comments weren't clear, etc. It's not the lack of understanding that bothers me (I make no claims at being perfect), it's the fact that I don't find out until it is too late to help the student with his or her writing. My entire goal in the course is to help you improve the quality of your writing, and I'm not aware that there is a problem, then I can't do that. So if you don't understand something I say or something I write on one of your papers, or what the requirements of a particular assignment are, please don't hesitate to ask. It's what I'm here for. This is especially important in an online class, where the student has a much greater burden of responsibility.

Post your questions in the general discussion area if that is appropriate, or in the areas set aside for discussion of the various essay topics or, if the question is a personal one, or is specific to your own work, then post it to your personal folder on the course conference.