English 102: “College Writing and Research” (Spring 2012)

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REQUIRED MATERIALS

A Student’s Guide to the First-Year Writing Program at UWM, 2011-12 Edition
DK Handbook

You are not required to buy a textbook for this class (except the DK Handbook); however, you will need to access a number of articles and book chapters online throughout the term. You will need to make arrangements to either print these off on your own printer, or in a campus library or computer lab.

COURSE PURPOSE AND ASSUMPTIONS

This course is centered upon academic research writing. As you will read in the Student Guide to the English Department’s First-Year Writing Program, your work in this class will help you to develop three important skills: (1) researching, (2) writing research essays, and (3) understanding your own research & writing processes. You will develop some well-researched scholarship, writing two essays for the 102 portfolio. You’ll also have a better sense for which research and writing methods work best for you.

Researching (or “critical inquiry”): Perhaps the most difficult parts of research are knowing what questions to ask, and then figuring out where to look to satisfy those questions once you have them. This is a process we call critical inquiry. So, one of the main aspects of this course will be learning ways to write your best questions, and how to work with those questions. We will spend time looking at successful research essays and talking about the questions behind them. Your will learn how to identify sources that fit your question and the requirements of academic research papers. You’ll read these sources using your own question to guide your process.

For your research you will need to become familiar with the UWM libraries, both the stacks in Golda Meier Library and its electronic resources. We will be meeting with a librarian at Golda Meier partway through the term for a research workshop. You will also be asked to review a series of online library tutorials throughout the semester. These research methods will be a constant topic of discussion in this class.

Research writing: Even in the first weeks of class you will write about possible research topics, and you will be turning in written assignments alongside each step of the research process. Sometimes you’ll be writing about a topic or idea even before you have a strong sense for it, and this is okay. Expect to be figuring things out as you write about them, and expect that the writing process will help you to develop your ideas more clearly than would be possible with reading alone. Eventually your work will begin to shape into a research essay (approximate length is generally 10 pages) that you will include in your portfolio. This essay will be a single, sustained exposition on the critical research question you have chosen to research, and you will include summaries and analysis of the major sources you’ve chosen.

Research analysis: Plan on writing about your research and writing techniques in your assignments throughout this term. As I mentioned above, the writing process will help you to develop your ideas more thoroughly, and this is why we ask you to create a “reflective” essay in which you describe the skills and techniques you’ve developed. You’ll turn in this reflective essay alongside the research essay in the final
portfolio. It will help both you and your final portfolio reviewers to understand your research-writing methods. The critical inquiry assignments you’ll do throughout the term are a good way to check your own progress in the work of the course.

Your two essays will be assessed by portfolio readers (two or more 102 instructors who have not read your work before) at the end of the term. At that time, they will be considering whether your work adequately meets the “goals and outcomes” of English 102, as found in the Student Guide. This does not mean that there is a “right” or “wrong” way to write an essay, or to do research. There are many different ways to do research, and many many ways to write well. All writers must choose how they will approach the texts they use—no one else can tell you exactly how you should do this. The portfolio readers will want to see the ways that you have made the “goals and outcomes” work for you, and the ways you have challenged yourself during this term.

Don't let this happen to you:

Large writing projects can be daunting! But there are ways to make them easier. In this class, I hope you'll find ways to make writing into a steady process rather than a frantic, stressful event. By working step-by-step, you can save yourself both time and stress. This writing process is something you can adapt into any major writing projects—academic, workplace, creative, etc.

**PREREQUISITES**

EPT score of “3” or above, or a grade of “C” or better in English 101.

**ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

Please note: the Student Guide provides specific information about course policies for all composition classes including this one. You are responsible for becoming familiar with the policies described there, as well as the information outlined here. For more information about the full range of UWM policies, visit: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf)
**Strict Attendance policy (!)** The English Department believes that a student’s success in a course like this one is directly related to that student’s regular participation in class sessions (see Student’s Guide 11). For this reason, the department rule is that a student who misses more than two weeks of English 102 cannot pass the course. For a section that meets twice a week, that means that missing more than four classes (for any reason—I cannot accept excused absences, even for emergencies), will mean an “F” in the course. Any time you are absent, you will need to check with me during the next class for any work I may have passed back.

If this attendance policy seems like it may be a problem for you this semester, it will be in your best interest to drop the course and take it another time. Talk to me if this is your situation.

Arriving Late? Part of your “class participation” grade is timeliness, and every lateness will affect this grade. If you arrive even a few minutes late to class, it will be your responsibility to make sure I have marked you present. **If you are very late (15 minutes or more), or leave very early, I will count it as half an absence.**

**PARTICIPATION**

Discussion: We will explore the research and writing processes together, out loud. The success of this class will depend upon your ability to participate in class discussions. It will be the job of the class members to take charge of the conversation. Just as the writing process will help you to develop your ideas more clearly, class- and group-discussions will help you to sound out ideas together. For this reason, it is your responsibility to participate and listen fully during class, and take careful notes throughout.

To give you credit for your efforts in this conversation, I often keep a “participation chart” during discussions, to keep track of regular participation. It’s not a matter of higher grades to those who talk the most—what I’m looking for is voluntary participation from each class member about once a week. This could be as simple as asking a question about an assignment or volunteering to read something aloud. It also includes asking questions for the class to discuss, sharing insights about the topic, or commenting on something another student has mentioned.

Peer Commentary: You will also be reading and commenting on one another’s papers. Collaborative writing activities like these might be difficult at first, but this is exactly the kind of process that academic writing requires. Most of the peer-commentary will be in small groups or pairs. I will also occasionally choose a random, anonymous assignment by a student to be discussed by the whole class. When we discuss student work, we give the writer feedback on our understanding of the writing, and what sorts of reading and interpretive methods we see at work. You may be surprised by a wide variety of responses. This will be a time to listen closely for the kinds of insights you can’t get just by reading your own work by yourself. You’ll need to take both compliments and criticisms in stride, and decide for yourself what you will do with our suggestions.

Conferences: You will most likely have three conferences during the semester: one individual discussion and progress-assessment meeting with me, one group conferences on drafts of your research essay, and one final individual consultation with me. You will receive more information about conferences as they approach. During each conference week our regular 102 sessions will not be held; instead, your conference will count as class attendance for that week. These conferences are also a major factor in your participation grade (see below). Please note that I reserve the right to adjust conference times from the date mentioned on the tentative assignment schedule.
GRADES AND EVALUATION

During the semester: Comments from your instructor and colleagues are the main feedback you will receive during this course. Since you will not be graded throughout the term, it is essential that you spend time considering and responding to the comments you receive. Your assignments are considered “works in progress” toward your final portfolio, and therefore are not graded throughout the term. You will not receive any letter-grades until after your portfolio has been passed or failed. This is because I want your focus to be on this critical research process I’ve described above; on the long-term portfolio project rather than the individual assignment. If you would like to discuss my comments, or if you are concerned about the progress you’re making in the course . . . or if you’d just like to talk about the writing with me, stop by during my office hours. You can also discuss your writing with a tutor at UWM’s Writing Center.

Students who are accustomed to the straightforwardness of periodic test-and-essay-grades may find this system a bit unnerving at first. But you will find that this feedback system is just as reliable in giving you a sense of your progress and your potential final grade, as long as you understand how it works! To track your own progress toward grade you seek, pay close attention to the feedback you receive on your work, and participate regularly in small- and large-group activities. Familiarize yourself also with the “goals and outcomes” (Student’s Guide 7) on which your final work is assessed.

Assignments will range from online library quizzes to research questions to an annotated bibliography of your sources . . . and will then move into growing drafts of your two essays.

Portfolios: At the end of the semester, if you have met the attendance requirements and completed all assignments, you may to submit a final portfolio for assessment. Your final portfolio will include two substantially revised essays (the research and reflective essays). These essays are products of the longer assignment sequence, which means that the amount of effort you put into the assignments throughout the term will determine the success of your final portfolio. Portfolios will be due [_________]. On that day I will also re-collect all of the assignments that you will have completed for the sequence (your “comprehensive folder”), so be sure to hold on to all of your assignments when you receive them back.

Portfolio assessment happens a few days after our last class of the term, and determines whether you are eligible to pass English 102. A passing mark at portfolio assessment gives you a grade between “A” and “C.” A failing mark at assessment gives you a grade between “C-“ and “F,” and requires you to re-take English 102.

Final grades: Once I receive your “pass” or “fail” mark from the portfolio readers, I go to work at calculating your final grade. The three things I focus on are timely, thorough assignments, class participation, and quality work. An “A” will go to a student who has put together a successful portfolio, participated regularly in class, turned in their work on time, and regularly submitted quality work for the assignment sequence.

- **Timely, thorough assignments (40% of grade):** A good portion of your grade is simply whether you turn the assignments in, complete and on time. If an assignment is late, or if the work is incomplete, you will see this noted at the top of the page. Incomplete assignments are counted late until they meet the requirements. “A” work in this category is when all assignments are on time and complete; each late or incomplete assignment will detract from the “A.” Every class-period of lateness will be tallied in my gradebook, and will bump your grade as follows: 0 to 2 classes late/incomplete = A, 3 to 5 = A-, 6 to 8 = B+ (etc).
- **Class participation (40% of grade):** All writers should be punctual to class and willing to participate. I will make note of tardiness, so please arrive on time. I will also at times give credit for active participation in discussion or small groups. I will also look at quality of the comments
you write on your colleagues’ drafts. Yes, your grade does depend partly on your willingness to speak up in class. Again, this does not mean that the students who speak most often will get the highest grades, only that I expect everyone in the class to make regular contributions to the conversation. Sometimes the best contribution to a discussion is a thoughtful question.

- **Quality work** (20% of grade): Although I am not the judge of your final portfolio, I will keep track of your work throughout the semester. The vast majority of student work will receive a simple check mark as credit for the assignment. I will award a few check-plus marks to assignments that show exceptional quality or effort. I’ll also give a check-minus to assignments that do not meet the standard of quality or fulfill the prompt. If you receive either mark, it will affect your “quality” grade.

  The most significant aspect of this grade will be your work on the essay drafts (assignments 9 through 13). With these assignments, I will be looking for consistent efforts to revise and develop the work, plus attention to the course goals and the feedback you gain from your colleagues and myself.

ASSIGNMENTS

**Save Assignments 1 through 14** (keep the hard copy you’ve turned in and have an electronic back-up), since you will be handing in all of the assignments again at the end of the semester. You will need to show that you have completed every assignment in order to submit a final portfolio.

Emailed assignments will be accepted only when the guidelines are followed. Please note that this requires some extra steps. See handout, “Electronic Submissions.”

Comments: I will be returning most of your essays to you with written comments. Early drafts will receive comments primarily about developing your interpretive questions and research methods. On an essay that is meant to be nearly finished, comments will address things like organization and structure of the argument. Be advised that grammar and mechanical correctness are your own responsibility.

Due dates: It is essential that every student keep up with the course work by handing in each assignment as it is due. The assignments are carefully sequenced, and each one builds toward the next, leading eventually to the essays that you will submit at the end of the term. Since it wouldn’t make sense to, say, write down ideas before you’ve done the research, or to compose a draft before you’ve figured out your question, it is important to do these assignments step-by-step, and to complete every assignment.

A word about length: While I do have expectations about the approximate length that your assignments should be, I will not specify a page length for your work. This is because I’d like the focus to be on the ideas you are developing, not on how many pages you need to fill. It is in your best interest, however, to push yourself to engage meaningfully with each assignment.

YOU SHOULD KNOW . . .

**Writing Center**: This is a free resource for writers on campus. The Writing Center (main location 127 Curtin Hall & also in the East Wing of the library; phone 229-4339; [www.writingcenter.uwm.edu](http://www.writingcenter.uwm.edu)) is staffed by awesome, knowledgeable tutors who are familiar with the demands of English 102. Students
have found the one-on-one work with a tutor to be helpful at all stages of the writing process, so don’t wait until the end of the semester to stop in. The Writing Center will ease workloads and headaches!

**Email, internet and class website:** I recommend that you check your email regularly throughout the term. While I will not assign or require anything via email that I have not also mentioned in class, I often post messages and reminders there. You will also need internet access for a series of library tutorials. You should receive an email from me during or before the first week of classes. Please be sure to check out our Desire2Learn (D2L) website within the first week of class, to be sure you are able to access the site. I will post all of the assignments on this course website, usually on the day they are passed out in class, in case you should need them. This syllabus will also be online, as well as other miscellaneous course documents.

**Non-native speakers of English:** The English Department offers a course that is equivalent to this one as an ESL (English as a Second Language) course. These sections have smaller class sizes and teachers who are trained to work with non-native speakers of English. Non-native speakers of English interested in this option should talk to me about this during the first week of class.

**Academic honesty:** Academic honesty is valued among writers, and required by federal law. To learn more about consequences for plagiarism, please consult your *Student’s Guide*, p 12.

**Administrative drops:** Any student who does not attend the first week of class is dropped from the course.

**Student Accessibility Center:** If you are concerned that you may have a learning disability, visit the SAC office in 112 Mitchell Hall. Disabilities may include: dyslexia, social anxieties, scholastic anxieties, physical handicaps and depression. If you work with an advisor at the Student Accessibility Center, please bring your “VISA” to me within the first week of class.

Welcome to English 102! I look forward to working with you this semester!