

ENGL 751 – Tools for Academic Writing: Clarity and Style

Fall 2021 • 1 credit • 8 week course (Oct 21 – Dec 16)
Thu 5:30 – 7:00 • Online

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Bulletin Description

Primary goal: Students will learn and practice using specific strategies for writing clear, correct, and audience-appropriate academic documents. In addition, they will investigate writing expectations and analyze academic writing in their own discipline.

Grading: satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to help students from all departments at NDSU become successful writers in their academic and post-academic careers. The basic assumption of the course is that successful writing is writing that meets the needs and expectations of its target audience. Students will learn to identify elements of clarity and style that constitute successful writing, and they will practice writing clear, correct, and audience-appropriate texts. In addition, students will analyze writing and research discourse practices in their fields of study.

The objectives of the course are for students to do the following:

1. Develop an understanding of audience and its role in writing;
2. Develop a working understanding of issues around clarity, correctness, style, and readability in academic writing;
3. Practice writing academic prose that is clear, correct, and effective; and
4. Investigate conventions and expectations of writing in their disciplines.

COVID-19 Statement

Given the need for courses to achieve maximum pedagogical value while maintaining a Covid-safe environment, this course will be taught online via Zoom. After the first day, the instructor may replace or supplement some class meetings with individual meetings. These meetings will be between the student and the instructor or with a writing consultant at the Center for Writers.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance, Participation, and Assignments: Students are expected to do the following:

1. Attend all class and individual meetings;
2. Complete required readings and assignments; and
3. Participate actively, professionally, and in a spirit of positive collaboration in all course activities and interactions.

If a situation arises whereby they are unable to meet the above expectations, students are required to inform the instructor by email. Students are responsible for making up any missed work.

Attendance Statement: The above attendance expectations conform to NDSU attendance policies, which can be read at www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf. Veterans and student service members with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible and are encouraged to provide Activation Orders.

Accommodations: Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services Office (www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices) as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty.

Required Texts

- Williams, J.M. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Any edition from 9th to 11th edition.

Recommended Resources

- H. Glasman. *Science research writing: For Non-Native Speakers of English*. London: Imperial College Press, 2010.
- J. Schimel. *Writing Science*. New York, NY: Oxford U Press, 2011.
- Swales, J. M. & Feak, C.B. (2000). *English in Today's Research World*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Swales, J. M. & Feak, C.B. (2012). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- A grammar handbook (hard copy or online)
- A style guide used in the student's discipline (hard copy or online)
- A dictionary & a thesaurus (hard copy or online)

Assignments

Weekly Assignments: Readings & Writing Exercises.

Self-Assessment: A short paper in which students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own writing. This assignment will be split into two parts: one at the start of the course, and one at the end.*

Disciplinary Writing Assessment: Students will interview two faculty members or professionals in their discipline about writing. They will present their findings in a short report.*

Document Analysis: Students will analyze parts of a published article in their disciplines using the tools acquired in this class.*

* - Requirements for these assignments will be spelled out in assignment sheets.

Evaluation Procedures and Grading Criteria

This course is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.

Assignments

To receive full credit, students complete all assignments and meet all requirements in the assignment sheets.

Course Grade

To receive a “satisfactory” grade in the class, students must do the following:

- Attend all class and individual meetings
- Receive full credit for all assignments.

Schedule

| Week Class date | <i>Readings</i> to be read before class | <i>Assignments</i> Writing Exercises: Post by next class & bring hard copy to next class | |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 Oct 21 | | | |
| 2 Oct 30 | Lesson 3: Actions | <i>Self-Assessment, part 1</i> Writing Exercises | |
| 3 Nov 4 | Lesson 4: Characters | Writing Exercises | |
| 4 Nov 11 | Lesson 5: Cohesion & Coherence | Writing Exercises | |
| 5 Nov 18 | Lesson 6: Emphasis | Writing Exercises | <i>Document Analysis</i> ↓ |
| 6 Nov 25 | THANKSGIVING – No class | | |
| 7 Dec 2 | Lesson 7: Concision | Writing Exercises | |
| 8 Dec 9 | Lesson 8: Shape | Writing Exercises | |
| Dec 16 | Plagiarism Handouts | Complete assignments <i>Self-Assessment, part 2</i> | |