

English 101
English Composition
3 semester hours

Text

Axelrod, Rise B. And Charles R. Cooper. *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. 5th ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Other Course Materials

one 3.5 floppy disk
notebook for journal

Catalog Description

The study of the elements of composition through writing and analysis of expository prose with emphasis on short essays.

Rationale: The purpose of English 101/Freshman Composition is to enable you to become a better writer and, consequently, a better thinker. The course consists of discussions/lectures about writing, readings from the text (both explanatory and exemplary), in-class writing exercises, basic word-processing instruction and use, conferences with the instructor, and the composition of five essays of 3-5 pages in length. Emphasis will be placed on writing as a process. To this end, instruction will focus on the importance of invention or pre-writing (finding something to say) and revision (finding the best way to say it) as well as the final product (the essay you turn in). The course will begin and end with a diagnostic essay, the purpose of which will be to aid in the evaluation of your progress as a writer. The essays or papers are sequenced to move from reflective to informative to argumentative, or if you prefer, from less to more difficult.

Attendance: Your attendance is especially important in this class and your grade will suffer with more than a couple of absences! That is not a threat; it is an observation. See pp. 46 of the *2000-2001 General Bulletin* for details and for the appeals process; in this course, 12 absences result in an automatic "F" grade. Appeals of absences may be directed according to the guidelines in *2000-2001 General Bulletin*: "If a student misses more than the number of class periods specified in university policy and believes that there are reasonable explanations for the absences [sic], he/she may appeal the absences to the dean of the school in which the course is being taught. Students may obtain a Student Absence Appeal Form from the office of the appropriate dean" (p. 46).

Academic Integrity Statement: "Mississippi College students are expected to be scrupulously honest. Dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism or furnishing false information, including forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records or identification, will be regarded as a serious offense subject to severe penalty, including, but not limited to, loss of credit and possible dismissal" (MC *General Bulletin*, p. 49). See MC Policy 2.19 for official policy.

Objectives

Students shall

1. learn to write effectively for various audiences
2. learn to write with clarity, conciseness and in standard edited English
3. learn to think critically
4. develop interpersonal skills that facilitate group work
5. understand the ethical dimensions of writing
6. appreciate their own cultures and cultures of others

Assignments and Assessment

5 papers

Diagnostic essay and final essay examination

journal

other?

Grading Scale

Varies by professor; some use a 10-point scale, others a six or seven point scale.

Papers will be graded on the basis of content, organization, development of ideas, and mechanics.

Late Papers Policy

This policy is developed by each professor.

Office and Appointments

Designated by each professor and posted on the office door.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 Diagnostic Essay 1; Ch. 1 (Introduction); Ch. 2 (Remembering Events); Computer Lab introduction

Students write a diagnostic essay (either in or out of class) which will give the instructor a sense of their writing skills at the outset of the course. Those students showing especially deficient skills may need to be moved to a remedial course. Otherwise, the diagnostic essay will serve as a point of reference for the instructor to evaluate the progress of the students when compared to the second diagnostic essay required at the end of the course.

Ch.1: The students are introduced to the idea that writing contributes importantly to learning, thinking, communication, personal development, and success (both academically and beyond). They

are also introduced to the concepts of purpose and audience (concepts which will be central to the writing assignments throughout the course). Here, too, the importance of writing as a process is introduced and stressed.

Ch.2: This chapter presents the students with their first intensive writing assignment: writing an essay about a significant event in their lives. This assignment has two goals: to teach the students to write a coherent narrative and to consider the importance of purpose and audience. The analysis of sample essays from the text reinforces these concepts and encourages critical thinking skills. In addition, this assignment leads students to confront and think critically about their own experiences and human experiences in general.

Students are introduced to the computer lab and word processing.

Week 2 Ch. 14 (Narrating); Drafting and revision

Ch. 14: Students become acquainted with various narrative strategies to use in writing the first paper.

Students work on drafts of Paper 1 in class (the computer lab) and confer with the instructor about problems they might be experiencing.

Week 3 Peer Editing workshop; Paper 1 (Remembering events) due

Students bring drafts of Paper 1 to class and break up into small groups for peer editing. Here they are encouraged to think critically in analyzing the writing of their peers and to rethink/revise their own work. These groups may work in a number of ways depending upon the focus of the instructor.

Week 4 Ch. 4 (Writing Profiles); Ch. 15 (Describing)

Ch. 4: A new writing assignment is given. This assignment introduces the student to informative (rather than narrative) writing. Now the students are asked to write not from personal memory but from personal observation (an aspect of this assignment might be to conduct field research, interviews, etc.). This assignment teaches students how to organize information and develops their research and analytical skills.

Ch. 15: Because description is essential to a well-written profile, the students learn the importance of word choice in creating richer, more effective essays. Because the emphasis is on language, this chapter proves helpful for all of the students' writing.

Week 5 Drafting, revision, conferencing, and peer editing

The drafting, revision and peer review process is much the same for all of the papers (see Paper 1), though here more time might be allowed for students to do field research or gather information.

Week 6 Paper 2 (Profile) due

Drafting, revision and conferencing continue until final drafts are due.

Week 7 Ch. 6 (Arguing a Position); Ch. 19 (Arguing)

With argumentation (Papers 3, 4, and 5), students begin the most challenging kind of writing.

Ch. 6: Paper 3 (Position) requires the students to develop an argumentative strategy that takes into consideration both their purpose and audience. This assignment requires that students examine an issue critically. They are encouraged to evaluate all sides of an issue rather than merely presenting a pre-formed opinion, to examine critically their own underlying assumptions, and to recognize the value of thinking through an issue and constructing an argument based on sound reasoning and evidence

Week 8 Drafting, revision, conferencing, and peer editing

Week 9 Paper 3 (Position) due

Week 10 Chapter 7 (Proposing a Solution)

Ch. 7: Paper 4 (Solution) builds on the critical skills used in Paper 3. Attention to audience is emphasized since proposals are aimed at particular readers. This assignment also lends itself well to collaborative work among the students since in the workplace many such writing tasks are collaborative. Thus, the instructor might break the class into teams or groups to work together on the paper (or to work together yet write the papers separately).

Week 11 Team group work; Drafting, revision, conferencing, and peer editing

Week 12 Paper 4 (Solution) due; Chapter 8 (Justifying an Evaluation)

Ch. 8: Students are asked to evaluate a particular subject, backing up their evaluations with convincing arguments based on standards of value their audience will likely deem appropriate. Again the students must carefully consider their audience and purpose, examining not only their own value standards but those of their readers in order that they can write an effective proposal.

Week 13 Chapter 18 (Comparing and Contrasting); drafting, revision, and peer editing

Ch. 18: Because evaluation usually draws the students into comparing or contrasting their subject with another, this chapter offers them strategies for doing so.

Week 14 Paper 5 (Evaluation) due

Final Exam: Diagnostic Paper 2

The final diagnostic paper allows the instructor to gain some sense what the students have learned over the course. The second diagnostic essay should show improvement in organization, sense of purpose and audience, reasoned and supported argumentation, and mechanics. The diagnostic essays can then, beyond serving as an evaluative tool for gauging students' progress and performance, when taken as a whole indicate to the instructor where the strengths and weaknesses may be in the instruction itself. Thus, for example, if the essays show little improvement in a sense of audience, the instructor can

restructure class time in the future to give more attention to audience. The value of the diagnostic essays in framing the course is that they allow the instructor to evaluate both the students and the course itself.

NOTE: The course outline does not propose to indicate all that an English 101 instructor does in the course nor does it propose to present all of the types of papers an instructor might wish to include. For example, the text has chapters on Remembering People (Ch. 2), Explaining a Concept (Ch. 5), Speculating About Causes (Ch. 9), and Interpreting Stories (Ch. 10)--these covering the major paper topics--as well as chapters on invention and reading strategies (Chs. 11,12), cuing the reader (Ch. 13), defining and classifying (Chs. 16,17), and essay examinations (Ch. 23) among others. An individual instructor might choose any of these or any combination of these as he/she deems necessary to further the students' progress. The syllabus does not attempt to include the various pedagogic methods or exercises an instructor might choose to use (since these differ widely from instructor to instructor), nor does it attempt to quantify the time spent in student conferences (scheduled and unscheduled).