RES-ECON 303
Writing in Resource Economics

Overview

Have you ever wondered how others perceive you through your writing? Does the idea of writing to an employer, an associate, or client cause you to stress over the right tone, word choice, syntax (it should!)? How do you balance a written voice that is at once professional and sincere, formal and respectful but not rigid or robotic? Have you gone brain-numb organizing source information and trying to formulate an original argument at 4 AM? Lastly, but by no means less importantly, have you ever ascribed an aesthetic value to a sentence, equated beauty with a string of words? Writing in Resource Economics will address these issues and others by giving you experience writing for a range of specific audiences and purposes, both within your discipline and in broader fields.

Res Econ 303 satisfies the Junior Year Writing requirement for students majoring in Resource Economics. The purpose of this course is to build on the writing and analytical skills, as well as general knowledge you have acquired during your time at the University of Massachusetts. We will focus on forms of writing that are and will be relevant and practical to you as you near graduation and begin considering the job market or graduate school.

As you may reasonably assume, this class is based on the idea that to become a better writer you must write. To that end you will write A LOT in this course while covering a variety of professional and intellectual contexts in anticipation of the kinds of writing expected of you in your chosen career.

Underpinnings

● Over the course of the semester you will develop good, fundamental writing habits by honing your instincts for the mechanics of writing.
● You will learn to identify your audience and write for it, nurturing an awareness that your audience is comprised of real human beings with brains and feelings and an abhorrence of boredom.
● We will have an ongoing discussion about writing in a globalized world, the impact technology has on writing, and the adjustments writers must make to communicate with contemporary audiences.
● Drafting, review, and revision are all intrinsic to the writing process; we will discuss how
to meticulously and efficiently observe these steps in order to present high-quality papers.

- You will become familiar with the tools and resources available to you in support of your improvement as a writer, including the University Writing Center, online citation generators such as Easybib, and various research databases.
- At every stage of the semester we will remind ourselves and each other that writing does not have to be a laborious, hair-pulling, hand-wringing process; rather, it is an opportunity to build confidence by expressing yourself intellectually through the creative act of assembling words, sentences, and paragraphs into representations of your acquired knowledge and experiences.

**Required Text** (available at Amherst Books)

**Recommended further reading and listening**
- Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*
- *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* by David Graeber
- NPR’s “Planet Money” podcast

**Assignments**

There will be regularly assigned readings. You will be responsible for knowing their content and being able to hold your own during discussions about them. **Written responses and other short writing assignments will be uploaded to the forum section on Moodle.** In addition to a range of weekly short writing assignments (exercises, informal, generative, and free writing, and responses to texts) that will either be individually evaluated (homework) or counted toward class participation (in-class), there will be four more substantial writing requirements, the fourth of which will be connected to a group presentation, which, all combined, will count for 60 percent of your overall grade. Each of these longer writing assignments will undergo a rigorous drafting and revision process, which is to say you should expect to write more than the official page or word requirement.

**Please note:** If you miss a class, do not email me asking for a summary of the material
covered, an explanation of the homework, or anything else of that nature. Basic information concerning lessons, homework, and deadlines are available on the syllabus and Moodle, or you can contact a classmate. If you still have questions, I will be happy to answer them during office hours.

Reflective Portfolio

Reflective Portfolios will gather a selection of your written work with the goal of providing an illustrative window into your strengths and skills as a writer and a thinker. Portfolios are not meant to be static archives; rather, they should create an active resource that helps you to

- identify acquired knowledge that is adaptable to a range of different contexts
- recognize your strengths and gaps as a writer and how prior knowledge has facilitated learning
- be accountable for your intellectual growth
- clarify goals and expectations
- realize your perspective in relation to others’ in order to become a more ethical writer
- develop a professional digital identity

Class Policies

Attendance in this class is mandatory and will be considered when calculating final grades. If you miss six or more classes you will be in jeopardy of failing the class. Extenuating circumstances--e.g. health, religious, or family stuff--will be reviewed on a case by case basis. If you miss class you are still 100 percent responsible for knowing the material covered during your absence and accountable for any work missed. It will be your task--not mine--to figure out what that is. I expect every student to come to class prepared to participate in meaningful, constructive ways during discussions and in-class activities. You engage with your peers and their writing through an ongoing dialog, and you will be expected to uphold a level of respect and courtesy typical of any academic, social, or professional environment.

Academic Honesty

By now you should be aware of the University’s policy toward plagiarism. If you are not please familiarize yourself: [http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/). Plagiarized text, no matter how short in length or elementary in idea, will not be tolerated. If I detect plagiarism in any of your writing, you will receive a zero for the assignment. From there I will decide whether the violation is severe enough to involve the Academic Honesty Office for additional penalization.

Grading

You will be evaluated on the quality of your work and the effort you put into improving your writing ability. Each of the four longer writing assignments will be graded based on a **15-point rubric** adapted specifically for this class (included with assignments), correlating with letter grades as such:
The following is a breakdown of how your final grade will be calculated:

-Major written work........................................................................................................................................60 points
-Class participation (verbal, in-class exercises, attendance, Moodle forum activity)..........................................................15 points
-Reflective essay......................................................................................................................................................15 points
-Portfolio................................................................................................................................................................10 points

Course Calendar

Week 1: 1/20
Introductions, goals and expectations, freewriting

Required reading: Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”

Assignment: Critical response to Orwell (250 words, double-spaced).

Week 2: 1/25 & 1/27
Summarizing, content analysis

Required reading:
1/25 - McClosky, Introduction, Ch. 1 - 4
1/27 - Kamenetz, “The Writing Assignment That Changes Lives”

Assignment:
1/25 - Personal introduction: Describe the first job you ever had (250 - 500 words, double spaced).
1/27 - Write down your realistic goals for the semester, the academic year, the rest of college, and the first year out of college while including the concrete steps required to achieve these goals (250 words, double spaced).
**Week 3: 2/1 & 2/3:** Monday 2/1 - Last day to add/drop without record
Research, topic, research question, thesis, supporting arguments, beginnings, endings

**Required reading:**
2/1 - McClosky, Ch. 5 - 8

**Assignment:**
2/1 - Develop a research proposal (100 words). Include overview of topic, its interest to you, its merit, a brief summary of your research plan.
2/3 - First draft of research paper due Wednesday, 2/10 posted in Moodle forum

**Week 4: 2/8 & 2/10**
Paper development, revision, giving feedback

**Required reading:**
2/8 - McClosky Ch. 9 - 12
2/10 - McClosky Ch. 13 - 16

**Assignment:** Final draft of research paper due Wednesday, 2/17 before midnight on Moodle (1000 words, double spaced); give feedback on two peer articles in Moodle forum.

**Week 5: 2/15 & 2/17:** Monday 2/15 - Presidents’ day, no class; Tuesday 2/16 follows Mon schedule.
Paper development; cover letter, resume, emailing

**Required reading:**
2/15 - McClosky Ch. 17 - 20
2/17 - McClosky Ch. 21 - 24

**Assignment:**
2/17 - Write a cover letter to your dream job (400 - 500 words, single spaced)

**Week 6: 2/22 & 2/24:**
Cover letter, resume, emailing

**Required reading:**
2/22 - McClosky Ch. 25 - 28
2/24 - McClosky Ch. 29 - 31

**Assignment:**
2/22 - Write a mock cover letter to the job you never dreamed of having (500 words, single spaced)
2/24 - TBA
Week 7: 2/29 & 3/2
Executive summaries, case studies

Required reading: TBA

Assignment:
2/29: 1 page resume; email request for a recommendation (100 - 250 words, single spaced)
3/1: Executive summary: Invent a company for which you work. Find a recent article about something in the news that might affect the company. Write an executive summary for your boss that summarizes the article and offers recommendations (250 words, double spaced).

Week 8: 3/7 & 3/9
The life of a product

Required reading: TBA

Assignment:
3/7: Choose a product to research and write a short narrative charting its path from its “birth” to the store shelf (125 - 250 words, double-spaced; due on Moodle 3/21)

Week 9: 3/14 & 3/16

No class - spring recess

Week 10: 3/21 & 3/23:
Case studies

Required reading: “We Googled You” (Harvard Business Review)

Assignment:
3/21: In a short essay, answer the following question based on the assigned case study: Should Fred hire Mimi despite her online activity? (125 - 250 words, double spaced; due 3/23)
3/23: Write your own case study narrative of a company, real or fictional (500 - 750 words, double spaced; first draft due 3/30 in class and posted in a Moodle forum)

Week 11: 3/28 & 3/30
Revising case study narratives

Required reading: TBA

Assignment: 3/30: Final draft of case study due Monday, 4/4 by midnight on Moodle.
**Week 12: 4/4 & 4/6**
Writing for money

**Required reading:** TBA

**Assignment:**
4/6: Post a crowdfunding video to Moodle with an explanation for how it is effective

**Week 13: 4/11 & 4/13**
Rhetoric of money

**Required reading:** TBA

**Assignment:**
4/13: First draft of group crowdfunding campaign due Wednesday, 4/20 in Moodle forum

**Week 14: 4/18 & 4/20:** *Monday, 4/18 - no class - Patriots’ Day*
Crowdfunding

**Required reading:** TBA

**Assignment:**
4/20: Give feedback to two peer group crowdfunding campaigns; Final draft of crowdfunding campaign due Monday, 4/25 in class

**Week 15: 4/25 & 4/27:** *Wednesday, 4/27 - last class*
Group presentations, reflective writing, ePortfolio