

EnglWrit 112: *College Writing*
Spring Semester 2012

Instructor: _____ Office: _____
Class meeting days/time: _____ Office hours: _____
Class location: _____ Email: _____

Welcome to *College Writing*! This course satisfies the university's first-year writing requirement, a fundamental part of your General Education at UMass Amherst.

GOALS

In this course, we'll examine writing as a social act that always occurs within a particular *context*, and we'll analyze the choices available to writers in those contexts. Our goal is to help you grow as a writer—not only for academic assignments, but also for the writing demands in your personal, professional, and civic lives. More specifically, we'll work together to improve your ability

- to write for a variety of audiences and purposes (e.g., to explore a topic for yourself, to communicate information to others, and to achieve particular rhetorical effects);
- to develop your thinking by questioning your own and others' views—thus writing essays in which your thinking evolves rather than essays that defend pre-formed positions;
- to gather, draw on, and cite diverse sources of information (e.g., your own experiences and observations, conversations with others, and academic research);
- to revise your writing in substantive ways by re-thinking and re-seeing your drafts and by playing with revision strategies as well as essay forms;
- to be a more critical reader of your own writing and give constructive feedback to other writers;
- to be aware of your writing processes and to make textual choices that are appropriate to purpose, audience, and occasion; and
- to carefully copy-edit your final drafts at every level (word, sentence, paragraph, and text).

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Fleming, David, & the UMass Amherst Writing Program Collective, eds. *Other Words: A Writer's Reader*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2009.
- Faigley, Lester. *Penguin Handbook, Second Custom Edition for University of Massachusetts Amherst*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2009.
- *The Student Writing Anthology, 2011-2012*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2011. (This is included with new editions of the *Penguin Handbook* at the Textbook Annex; it can also be purchased separately.)
- Class magazine(s). At least once during the semester, everyone's essays will be published in booklet or digital form for the class to read. (You do not need to buy this magazine.)
- A notebook (paper and/or laptop versions) for generative writing, in-class activities, and such.

ASSIGNMENTS

Our assignments are based on the assumptions that writing is an activity, that people learn to write by writing and by giving and getting feedback on writing, that writers need to be aware of their own processes, and that your writing is therefore central to this course.

1. Essay Assignments. You will write five essays, each 1,000-1,250 words in length. Each will go through an extensive writing process, and each will introduce new challenges. **Unit I: Inquiring into Self** asks you to analyze an aspect of your personal context and to write about this to a familiar audience. For **Unit II: Interacting with Texts**, you will write a critical response to one or more published texts and to tailor the response to an academic audience. **Unit III: Adding to a Conversation** asks you to identify and pursue a line of inquiry that interests you, research multiple sources, and communicate what you learn to a more public audience. **Unit IV: TBA** differs from section to section and will be explained later in the semester. Lastly, our course will conclude with **Unit V: Final Reflection**, which consists of (a) a final reflection essay based on all of your writing in the course *and* (b) reflection by our writing community that will happen at our final class meeting *during final exam week*.

2. Process Writing & Portfolios. *College Writing* is based on the belief that writing is a process. In order to grow and develop as writers, we need to write, write, and then write some more. For each major essay, you will engage in a rigorous writing process: 1) **generative writing**, in which you explore early ideas; 2) an **initial draft**; 3) a substantially **revised draft**, based on feedback from self, peers, instructor, and others; 4) a further **revised and copy-edited final draft**; and 5) **reflective writing** about your writing processes and products. These steps are meant to help you focus on specific aspects of your writing and get relevant feedback at different points in the writing process. With certain assignments, we may devote more time to certain stages of the process even more, and other times, we may move more quickly through one or more steps. In at least one unit, we'll experiment with publishing your text.

Be sure to save every piece of writing! For each unit, you'll create a portfolio that includes the final essay as well as generative writing, initial and revised drafts, and written feedback from your readers. At the end of the semester, you'll create a comprehensive portfolio with all of your writing from the course. This portfolio is not a separate assignment but will serve as the basis for your Final Reflection.

3. Reading & Reflection. Our course will also help you explore the choices available to you as a writer. **Reading** texts by other writers, including your own classmates, will help you become aware of the options you have for developing, organizing, and presenting your ideas to others; in other words, you will learn to *think like a writer*. **Reflection** on your own writing will also help you identify your writing options. Throughout the writing process, you'll write short reflections about the choices you made and why you made them. The course will end with a much more extensive Unit V: Final Reflection essay that will ask you to reflect on all the writing you've done in the course.

4. Peer Response. Learning to write means learning to be read by many others. Not only will I respond to your writing, but also our class will become a writing community in which you'll regularly give and get critical peer response. By giving constructive feedback, you'll learn to read like a writer. By listening carefully to others, you'll learn to make revisions that affect readers in ways you had hoped.

5. Best Text Contest and *Student Writing Anthology*: Your writing for this course can reach a wider audience than just the people in this class. There are opportunities for your work to be recognized in the Writing Program's annual Best Text Contest, exhibited at our annual Celebration of Writing (held this year on May 2, 2012), and published in our annual *Student Writing Anthology*. Information about the Contest, Celebration, and *Anthology* can be found at <http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/>.

CLASS POLICIES AND GRADES

Please read the following policies carefully, and do ask me if you have any questions.

Attendance. Regular attendance in Englwr112 is required. The course will give you frequent opportunities for college-level reading, writing, speaking, and listening—activities that are complex and require time and feedback to do well. Regular attendance means that you are *writing* regularly and that your classmates and I can give your writing the attention it deserves. Attendance is also required because reading and writing are social acts, and you are responsible for contributing to our intellectual community. For these reasons, you need to be in class on time and prepared for *every* meeting.

If you need to be absent for a required athletic event, field trip, military obligation, or court appearance; if there is a death or serious illness in your family; if you experience an accident or serious illness; if you are absent because of religious observance; or if there is some other legitimate extenuating circumstance preventing you from attending, you will most likely be excused from class. But note that, in such cases, *you are responsible for prior notification and/or subsequent documentation and for making up all missed work.* Your instructor will offer reasonable assistance with the latter. For the University's policies on absences, go to http://www.umass.edu/registrar/gen_info/class_absence.htm. Be aware that too many absences regardless of reason may make it impossible for you to meet course requirements.

For “unexcused” absences, in which you miss class for some *ordinary* reason—e.g., a cold or headache, a pressing deadline in another course, a missed flight or bus back to campus—the Writing Program allows three such absences without penalty for MWF classes and two absences without penalty for TTh and MW classes; again, you are responsible for making up all work. If you miss more than that, your final grade may be lowered: for MWF classes, up to one-third of a letter grade each for the fourth through sixth unexcused absences and up to one-half a letter grade for each absence after that; for TTh and MW classes, up to one-half a letter grade each for the third and fourth unexcused absences and up to three-quarters of a letter grade for each absence after that. Note that missing a scheduled conference may also count as an absence. Turning in papers late and coming to class excessively or frequently late may result in grade penalties as well. Finally, students who miss more than eleven classes on a MWF schedule or seven classes on a TTh or MW schedule, without good reason, *cannot* in most cases pass this course.

Plagiarism. When using ideas, words, and short passages from other people's writing in your own writing, you are *required to acknowledge the source.* Failure to acknowledge the contribution of others is considered plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Please read the Writing Program's statement about plagiarism in the opening pages of *The Penguin Handbook*, which contains additional information and advice. We will discuss plagiarism more in class, but note that suspect papers (e.g., those without drafts or works cited pages, papers which make large departures in style from your other work) can be submitted to the electronic plagiarism detection service Turnitin.com as part of the grading process. For the University's Academic Honesty Policy, see http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.

Final Grade. Your final grade for the semester will be based on the following breakdown:

Unit Portfolios, I-IV (units might not all be weighted exactly the same)	80%
Unit V: Final Reflection essay & class meeting	10%
Writing Community Membership	10%
Total	100%

Final grades will be based on the following numerical equivalents and general definitions:

letter	grade pt	percent	meaning
A	4.0	100-94	excellent
A-	3.7	93-90	
B+	3.3	89-87	
B	3.0	86-83	good
B-	2.7	82-80	
C+	2.3	79-77	
C	2.0	76-73	fair
C-	1.7	72-70	
D+	1.3	69-67	
D	1.0	66-60	poor
F	0.0	59-0	failure

**Note: Grades of B and above are considered honors grades. The grade of A is reserved for excellence.*

RESPONSIBILITIES TO OUR WRITING COMMUNITY

Creating a community that enables us to grow and develop as writers depends on each of us fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another, and being receptive readers of one another's writing. As with any University class, students are expected to adhere to the guidelines for classroom behavior as stated in the "Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Respect" in the *Code of Student Conduct* (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/classroomcivility/).

Participation. Active, regular participation is a basic expectation of this course. One of the best ways to learn to write, after all, is to discuss the choices available to you as a writer and to share ideas about writing with your classmates. As a result, all students are expected to participate actively in class and to provide respectful responses to others' contributions.

Conferences & Office Hours. I encourage you to come to my scheduled office hours to discuss questions, concerns, and your writing in general. If you have a time conflict with my office hours and would like to meet, please see me to arrange an appointment. At least once during the semester, you will meet individually with me for a required student-teacher conference. This is a time for you to discuss more fully your writing and your progress in the course.

Final Class Meeting during Exam Week. **A final meeting for this course will be held *during final exams week* and will serve as the culminating event of the course.** This *required* class meeting is a chance to reflect as a group on the writing you've done over the semester. Be sure to account for this meeting when making end-of-semester plans. As we get closer to exam week, check SPIRE for the date, time, and location of our final meeting.

The Writing Center. As a UMass Amherst student, you have access to *free* one-on-one writing support from our campus Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library. Trained tutors work with writers in 45-minute sessions to brainstorm, structure a piece of writing, learn strategies for copyediting, and more. All student writers—whether you love writing, struggle with writing, are mystified by writing, or all of the above—are welcome. And remember that you can keep using the Writing Center even after you've taken *College Writing*. To make an appointment—which is strongly encouraged—go to <http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>; or you can simply walk in and see if a tutor is available (hours posted at website above). Make sure that you bring your assignment, notes, and/or draft (either paper or electronic copies are fine).