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| WRIT 6500  Rockefeller 189  Section 004  Monday & Wednesday, 10:10-11:25 | Instructor: Nathan Lindberg  Office Hours: Usually after class  Office: 101H McGraw  nathanlindberg@cornell.edu |

**WRIT 6500: Strategies for Self-Editing**

In this course, we will address common language problems that occur in graduate students’ writing. We will start at the word level with articles (*a/an* and *the*), proceed to prepositions, and then verb tense. Next we will cover these sentence-level issues: (a) making sentences flow from one to the next, (b) making clear subjects and action verbs, (c) breaking up noun phrases, and (d) revising long sentences. Finally, we will look at and evaluate the overall form of sections of a paper and the entire paper.

For most classes, you will have short pre-lesson reading assignments that will explain experts’ opinions on subjects. Then in class we will have short discussions about the readings, followed by exercises that allow you to practice using the recommendations. Finally, you will have a chance to apply what you learned to your own writing.

For each class you must submit at least two questions and maybe some of your thoughts. You will do this in a Question Log, which will be on a shared page of our class’ website. Then every fifth class, we will share these questions in small groups to try to find answers. Each small group will post one of their questions to a new website page, and we will discuss and answer it as a class.

**Course Learning Objectives**

* to recognize graduate students’ common language problems from the word-level to overall structure;
* to become familiar with strategies for addressing such problems;
* to practice strategies addressing common language problems;
* to share and discuss questions in small groups and with the class;
* to become more independent in the self-editing process;
* to gain more mastery of the English language and the ability to control writing to produce a desired effect.

**Our Basic Class Plan**

Here’s what we will do for most classes: (a) before class, you will look over the assigned readings introducing potential problems and strategies for addressing them; (b) in class, we will have a discussion about these problems and strategies; (c) then you will look at your own writing, using the strategies to find and address any problems; (d) after each class, you will post a Work Sample, which is a short example of what you found and how you addressed the problem. You will also post questions you were not able to answer. These questions may be about the readings, but do not need to be.

Every fifth class, you will meet in small groups and try to answer your questions. Each group will then choose one question for the class to address. Then the entire class will answer these selected questions.

**Tools and Materials You Will Need to Bring**

Every class you will need to bring a laptop, or the equivalent, that you can comfortably write and edit on.

You will also need to bring samples of your own writing. These samples should not be polished work, but work that you are unsatisfied with. Ideally, you might have a writing assignment you received disparaging marks about. You might bring a rejected manuscript. You might bring a draft of some project you are working on. You could even write a new manuscript, but I would caution you not to spend too much time writing something just for this class. It may take your energy away from editing. You will need at least two samples of your writing. One should be about 300 words. This could be a complete text or it could be a section from a larger text. The other text should be much longer, preferably 10 or more pages. You can keep the same two texts for the class, or change to different ones if you prefer.

**Assignments**

There will be short reading assignments that you should do before class. These assignments will provide background information about what we will discuss, so reading them will help you get more out of class. So the reading will not be too burdensome, I’ve tried to choose texts that you can read in about an hour or less.

After most classes, you must submit a short passage from your own work that contains some elements of what we worked on. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to summarize your thoughts and relay to me any problems you might have.

Based your short summaries, our discussions, and your own thoughts, you will create a final presentation. For this presentation, you will have five minutes to tell the class significant points you addressed in your writing, how you addressed them, and how you can move forward into the future.

**Question Logs**

In class, most work will be independent. As a consequence, you will not have a chance to bring up questions to the class. The purpose of Question Logs is to give us a common area to save questions to ask in later discussions. Every fifth class we will have Question Log discussions, during which you will get a chance to bring up your questions and find answers to them.

For the first 40 minutes of class, you will discuss your questions in small groups. Then your group will select and post one of these questions for the class to address. For the last 25 minutes of class, we will discuss and answer these selected questions.

**Course Texts**

Before most classes, you will have short texts to read. Most of these texts are excerpts from books that I have scanned and uploaded to our Blackboard site. These books are excellent resources and I would encourage you to buy any of them:

* Caplan, Nigel A. *Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Writers.* Michigan Series in English for Academic and Professional Purposes. Michigan University Press: 2012. ISBN978-0-72-03501-4
* Hoffman, Angelika H. *Scientific Writing and Communication*. Oxford University Press. 2010. ISBN978-0-19-539005-6
* Schimel, J. (2012). *Writing science: How to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
* Swales, John and Christine Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills, 3rd ed.* University of Michigan Press: 2012. 978-0472034758
* Williams, J. M. & Bizup, J. (2014). *Style: Lessons in clarity and grace* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

These books will be on reserve in Uris Library.

**Course Policies**

**Course Attendance.** The graduate writing courses are highly interactive. Knowledge gained by attending the course cannot be replicated by reading a textbook or peers’ notes. Thus, attendance in each class meeting is crucial. If you know ahead of time that you will need to miss a class meeting, discuss the situation with me and we can work together to create a plan for keeping up with the class. Students are who are regularly late for class, regularly leave class early, and/or who miss more than two class meetings are in danger of receiving an Unsatisfactory (U) for the course.

**Note to Students with Disabilities.** If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide me with an accommodation notification letter from Student Disability Services. Students are expected to give two weeks’ notice of the need for accommodations. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with me within the first two class meetings.

**Assessment**

This course is a credited, un-graded course. In order to earn a satisfactory (passing) mark for the course, students should not have more than two absences and must actively participate in the course. Here is what I consider participation:

* preparedness: be familiar with the assigned reading, bring your laptop and any other required material or work; submit your assignments;
* come to class: every class is important, so come to all of them. Also, I will start class on time every time, so please don’t be late;
* participate: you can learn a lot from discussions and your classmates’ presentations, so when they happen, please pay attention, ask questions, and make contributions. Texting or other distractions while people are talking not only impede learning but are very impolite.

**Course Schedule**

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| Date | Classroom Tasks | Homework for Lesson |
| 3/21  M | Introduction  Articles *a, an,* and *the*  We will discuss why these three words can be so difficult to master. We will investigate how meaning changes with article usage and we will work with some text to demonstrate these various meanings. |  |
| 3/23 | Continue articles *a, an,* and *the*. | Reading #1: Master (2007) Appendix  Bring a text of about 300 words. It should be an unpolished text that you want to improve. See “Tools and Materials You Will Need to Bring” above.  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 3/28 | Spring Break |  |
| 3/30 | Spring Break |  |
| 4/4  M | Prepositions – including phrasal verbs  We will discuss why prepositions are one of the last features English as additional language students master. We will use corpora software to determine which prepositions to use. | Reading #2: Caplan 134-135 and 138-139  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/6 | Verb Tense  We will discuss how verb tense changes meaning and also where certain verb tenses are commonly used and why. | Reading #3: Carlock et al. 103-106; Schimel 134-137  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/11  M | Share findings with a small group of students with similar academic interests to your own. | Prepare to address your questions from the Question Logs to a small group of students who have similar academic interests to your own. |
| 4/13 | Sentence flow  We will discuss writer responsible texts and creating a flow from sentence to sentence. | Reading #4: Hoffman 37-42 and 113-117, Swales & Feak 30-33; Carnegie Mellon Handout  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/18  M | Clear subjects and action verbs  We will discuss making clear subjects and linking them closely to action verbs. | Reading #5: Williams & Bizup 33-45; Schimel 137-138.  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/20 | Noun phrases and nominalizations  We will discuss breaking up long noun phrases and changing nominalizations into action verbs. | Reading #6: Hoffman 56-62; Caplan 108; Swales & Feak 20.  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/25  M | Revising Long Sentences | Reading # 7: Williams & Bizup 126-135, 141-151,165-167; Hoffman 54-56; Schimel 120-123.  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 4/27 | Share findings with a small group of students with similar academic interests to your own. | Prepare to address your questions from the Question Logs to a small group of students who have similar academic interests to your own. |
| 5/2  M | Reverse outlines  Making a reverse outline for an entire, lengthy text. | Reading #8: Reverse Outlines - Various Sources.  Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 5/4 | Reverse outlines  Making a reverse outline for a section of a long text. | Post Work Example and Question Logs on our Google Site. |
| 5/9  M | Final Presentations  You will have five minutes to tell the class significant points you addressed in your writing, how you addressed them, and how you can move forward into the future. | Prepare your final presentations. |
| 5/11 | Final Presentations (continued) |  |