

## ENG 304: Advanced Writing Spring 2013

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**Office Hours:** Tues & Thurs, 400-500PM, or by appointment

### Course Goals and Philosophy

Writing is bound up by the context of its creation and purpose, and in this class we will be exploring a range of contexts and considering the choices that are available to writers in these contexts. My purpose and goals for this class are to:

- Help you be a more effective and artful writer in academic, professional and personal contexts.
- Encourage you to become aware of *your* position on ideas, concepts, topics and events and be able to express that position clearly to yourself *and* your audience.
- Build your critical and creative thinking skills.

While many of the assignments in this class may seem somewhat “artsy” to those of you not inclined to English classes, the skills built by these assignments can be translated into any discipline. What I ask of you is to bring a willingness to try new things, to play with language, to be willing to “fail” in order to reach the greater realization. Writing can, and should, be fun. It is the way we express ourselves, the way we learn and synthesize information, the way we connect with others. This has always been true, but it is even more so in a world where our connections are often made in a virtual space. With more and more of our communication transpiring textually (email or text instead of phone calls, online courses, catching up on Facebook instead of over coffee, debates in the blogosphere, business branding built in cyberspace), it is necessary that we be able to effectively reach others through writing. It is often how we are known, the medium through which we are known and judged and should be a purposeful and authentic tool for expression.

*“How do I know what I think, until I see what I say?”* – E.M. Forster

Beyond this, writing is release and revelation. Writing can lead to deeper analysis and understanding, not only of our material but ourselves. While structure and planning are important for effective writing, be open to surprise, to realization, to changing direction when your thoughts take you a different way on the page. Use your writing to clarify your thinking, to dig deeper, to learn. Don’t expect to have all the answers before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). Write and see what you find out about yourself.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Through the assignments, you will improve your ability to:

- Develop an effective writing process which includes feedback and revision in order to improve not just the style of prose, but also the quality of analysis and argument to meet readers’ needs.
- Stretch your boundaries and take writing risks.
- Revise your writing substantively (more deeply than proofreading) to improve style, form *and* content

- Use different rhetorical strategies to craft complex, analytic, well-supported arguments.
- Provide constructive feedback to your peers on their written work, and address issues identified by your instructor and peers when revising your own written work.
- Critically analyze other writers' work by paying attention to how they assemble evidence, interpret their objects of study and argue for particular conclusions.
- Differentiate the audiences for various types of text, explain the strategies used for writing to different audiences and genres and craft texts which take into account the needs of audiences through style, tone and genre.
- Expand your awareness of yourself and your ideas and points of view through writing.
- Synthesize the writing of others and integrate your own thinking into it in seamless combination.
- Use the writing process in order to develop and extend your thinking—thus writing essays in which your thinking evolves rather than essays that defend pre-formed positions.

### **Overview of Assignments:**

In this course, you undertake individual writing projects that culminate in two different essays and a semester long blogging project. The first essay will be persuasive in nature, using rhetoric to pose a cohesive, complex argument about a subject of your choosing. The second essay will be a narrative, reflective essay working to make meaning out of a personal experience. The blogging project will be expository in nature, and consist of weekly blog posts on a theme of your choosing. Each essay will undergo two workshops in class before the final product is due (as specified in the Weekly Coursework). Workshop participants (as well as the instructor) will read each essay with a critical eye toward the elements that comprise good writing: style, form, clarity, and content. The blog articles will be evaluated on the same elements of writing, but the overall progress will be in improvement in the form not revision of individual articles.

Because writing is connected to reading in such an integral and important way, you will also have weekly reading assignments. You are expected to come to class with comments, criticisms, responses, and questions about the assigned readings. Reading critically every week will make you better readers, better thinkers, and therefore, better writers. There will also be in-class writing assignments, focused on either responses to ideas about writing or style exercises to help you stretch outside of your usual writing box.

### **Required Materials**

Access to a VCU email account – please check this regularly for messages from me.

A Facebook account and membership in class Facebook group

A thumb drive for saving and transporting work.

There is no required text for this class, but there will be weekly readings posted in Blackboard which you will be responsible for, so please be certain to check the course page at least weekly, if not more often.

### **Required formatting for essays:**

All essays will be submitted electronically. Please ensure that they meet the following specifications. If they do not meet these standards, points will be automatically deducted:

- Saved as .doc or .docx file.

- File name should be as follows: Name – Persuasive or Narrative – Draft #
  - ex: Charity Fowler – Persuasive – Draft 1.doc
- Times New Roman, 12 point font, black.
- 1 inch margins all around
- Double-spaced
- Contain a writer's memo reflecting on your process in writing and/or revising the essay.
- Documentation: MLA or APA, please let me know which you are using and be consistent.

### **Grading:**

- Final portfolio: 20%
- Blog: 20%
- Writing Assignments: 20%
- Workshops: 20%
- Oral Presentation/Debate: 10%
- Participation: 10%

Please see the grading policies for more specific information about how grades will be determined.

### **Class and University Policies**

**Attendance Policy:** You must come to class every day and on time. We will often start class with in-class writing assignments and you *will not* be able to make that work up if you are tardy.

University policy is that an instructor may lower a student's final course grade due to absences or repeated tardiness. Because this is a Tuesday/Thursday class, university policy provides that you *may not miss more than six classes and still pass the course*. Beyond this, repeatedly missing class or being late will reduce your grade. You may miss two classes with no penalty, but for each unexcused absence beyond that, your final grade will be reduced by 2 points. Each tardy will result in a 1 point grade reduction.

Late work will receive a deduction in grade, pursuant to the attached grading policies. I will not accept work that is more than 2 days without prior permission from me. If you must miss class for a previously excused reason, please ensure your work is turned in on time via email.

\*\* Excused absences and unforeseeable circumstances include the following: religious holidays with advance written notice (see important dates below), illness with a doctor's note, family emergencies, planned family events for which you must be out of town so long as you tell me about it with adequate advance notice, planned out of town events in which you are participating. Please note that for planned absences, no late work will be accepted. You may miss class and have it "excused" (i.e. no deduction in grade), but I will expect your work to be turned in on time or before you leave.

### **Participation & Responsiveness**

While expectations for papers can seem clear cut, I want to be clear what is expected to earn your participation and workshop/responsiveness grade, since the two combined are 30% of your grade. The readings in the class are *not optional* and we will discuss them in class. I am not a fan of lecturing--this is a writing class and you will grow as writers only through critical thinking and the free exchange of ideas. The readings I have chosen are all intended to help you grow as a writer and many contain teaching principles of good writing. If you have not read, then we cannot discuss—I must then just

lecture for you to learn information we could otherwise be discussing and experimenting with in practice. I expect your thoughts and questions on the pieces we read and look forward to engaging with you in a productive dialogue about the process and techniques of good writing.

Even more important than the readings is what you, as writers and readers, are expected to give your peers. A workshop only works if everyone comes prepared, having read the work of those in their groups and having commented on it with *constructive* criticism aimed at helping their peers. We'll be talking some about how to respond to others' work and what constructive criticism looks like, but workshops count for 20% of your grade and I will not accept you giving those in your group less than your sincere efforts to assist them. You can expect them to do likewise--basically, treat each other the way you want to be treated and give the help you would like to receive. If I receive complaints about the quality of workshopping, I will investigate more closely and deduct grades accordingly.

**Students with Disabilities:** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require that VCU provide an “academic adjustment” and/or a “reasonable accommodation” to any individual who advises us of a physical and/or mental disability. If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise the instructor or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your limitation(s). This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.

**Email Policy:** Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the University as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety:  
<http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/email.htm>

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** The VCU Resource Guide states: “Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as an institution of higher education. “Therefore, it must act to maintain these values, even to the point of separating from the University those who violate them. [The VCU honor system policy] describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. All persons enrolled in any course or program offered by VCU, and all persons supervising the learning of any student are responsible for acting in accordance with the provisions of this policy.”

VCU has recently revised its honor policy. Students should review that policy as described in the VCU Resource Guide, <http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/honor.html>. In this class, because coursework will be at times collaborative, particular issues of integrity arise. Students should not copy or print another student’s work without permission. Any material from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, students should respect the work of others and in no way present it as their own.

**Student Conduct in the Classroom:** According to the VCU Resource Guide, “The instructional program at VCU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. Accordingly, in classrooms, laboratories, studies,

and other learning areas, students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner so that the faculty member can proceed with their [sic] customary instruction. Faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) may set reasonable standards for classroom behavior in order to serve these objectives. If a student believes that the behavior of another student is disruptive, the instructor should be informed.” ***Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom.*** Also, the University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having “...in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university...”

See the Faculty Guide for Student Conduct for more information [<http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/conductguide.html>]. Certainly the expectation in this course is that students will attend class with punctuality, proper decorum, required course materials, and studious involvement. The VCU Resource Guide contains additional important information about a number of other policies with which students should be familiar, including Guidelines on Prohibition of Sexual Harassment, Grade Review Procedure, and Ethics Policy on Computing. It also contains maps, phone numbers, and information about resources available to VCU students. The VCU Resource Guide is available online or through the Division of Student Affairs.

***What this means:*** Respect your peers. Listen when they are speaking. Listen when I am speaking. Come to class on time and prepared. Cell phone usage is prohibited. No texting in class. We will be working on computers some days--no email, Instant Messaging, Facebook checking or web surfing allowed in class, either. If I find you disrupting class, I will ask you to leave and you will not get credit for attendance or participation that day. If I see you on Facebook once class is in session, you will not get credit for participation that day.

### **VCU Statement on Safety**

What you need to know and do to be prepared for emergencies at VCU

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify> ) Keep your information up to date.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms--the routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>)
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

### **VCU Mobile**

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable resource for the latest VCU information on the go. It contains information including the VCU director, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources, Blackboard and more. To download to your smartphone or for more information, please visit <http://m.vcu.edu>.

### **Important Dates for Spring 2013:**

Last day to drop class: January 20

Last day to provide written notice of intent to observe religious holidays: January 25

Last day to withdraw from class with a mark of "W": March 22

## Weekly Coursework

[This schedule is subject to change. I will always give you at least a week's notice of any amendment]

All readings are in Course Document folders on Blackboard, either as a PDF or a link, grouped by date due.

### **Week 1 (January 15 & 17) – Course Introduction**

**Tues:** Introduction to class and each other.

**Thurs:** Discussion of Topic Ideas for Semester Projects

Set up Blogs

Read:

- Gunelius - "5 Tips to Choosing a Blog Topic" (external link in Course Documents)
- *Content Rules* - Chapter 2 basic guidelines for creating content
- *Content Rules* - Chapter 6 (excerpt) – 6 characteristics of good content

### **Week 2 (January 22 & 24) – Introduction to Persuasive and Narrative Writing**

**Tues:** The Art of Persuasion and Rhetoric

Read:

- Greene - "Argument as Conversation: The Role of Inquiry in Writing a Researched Argument"
- Selections from Chapter 7 of *Professional and Public Writing*, Coleman & Funk:
  - "Persuasion and Argument"
  - "Making Assumptions"
  - "Reviewing the Elements of Argument"

**Thurs:** Introduction to Narrative

Read:

- Sanders - "The Most Human Art: Ten Reasons Why We'll Always Need a Good Story"
- Hampl - "Memory and Imagination"

Due:

- Interests/Stances Survey
- Signed acknowledgment form

### **Week 3 (January 29 & 31) – Blogging & Narrative**

**Tues:** Blogging – what do I write? What makes a good blog post?

Read:

- *Content Rules* - Chapter 4 excerpt (Intro to Style)
- *Content Rules* - Chapter 11 – guidelines for blogging
- Sample Blog Posts from previous classes

**Thurs:** Narrative Essays – Style & Reflection

Read:

- Szczepanski - "Story Told Simply"

- Steiner - "Sleeping with Alcohol"
- Maddox - "How He Should Have Died"

#### **Week 4 (February 5 & 7) – Points of Consideration**

**Tues:** First Steps: Audience, Voice, Style

**Read:**

- Lamott – “Shitty First Drafts”
- Fulwiler - "The Role of Audiences"
- Bishop - "Thinking About Your Interactions with Other Writers and Readers"

**Thurs:** Grammar Review

**Due:** Partner/Topic Information sheet

*Friday Feb 8<sup>th</sup> – Blog Post #1 due*

#### **Week 5 (February 12 & 14) - Research & Responding to Others' Writing**

**Tues:** Library Research & Citation

**Read:**

- Chapter 6 excerpt: “Evaluating Sources” (includes section on citation, as well)

**Thurs:** Responding to Others – How to Workshop

**Read:**

- Bishop - "Thinking About Your Method for Drafting, Responding and Revising"
- Elbow & Belanoff - "Summary of Ways of Responding"
- Straub - "Responding--Really Responding--to Other Students' Writing"

**Due:** First Draft Narrative Essay

*Friday, Feb 15<sup>th</sup> - Blog post #2 due*

#### **Week 6 (February 19 & 21) – Style & Argument**

**Tues:** Writing with Style

**Read:**

- Vonnegut - "How to Write With Style"
- Weathers - "The Winston Weathers Writing Way: A Self-Examination"
- Bishop - "Reading, Stealing and Writing Like a Writer"

**Thurs:** Arranging Your Argument Effectively

**Read:**

- Selections from Chapter 7 of *Professional and Public Writing*, Coleman & Funk (PDF):
  - “Strategies for Arranging Arguments”
  - “Finding a Middle Ground”
  - “Evaluating Sources” (from Chapter 6)

*Friday Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> - Blog post #3 due*

## **Week 7 (February 26 & 28) – Narrative & Persuasion**

**Tues** – Workshop First Draft of Narrative Essay

**Thurs:** Effective Persuasion

**Read:**

- Declaration of Independence
- Dr. King’s speech
- “A” Essays from previous semesters

*Friday March 1 - Blog post #4 due*

## **Week 8 (March 5 & 7) – SPRING BREAK**

## **Week 9 (March 12 & 14) – Persuasion and Blogging Intervention**

**Tues:** Argument Structure – Work with Partner

**Due:** Preliminary Persuasive Outline

**Thurs:** What about the rules?

Blogging Intervention – Writing the second half

**Read:**

- Marius - "False Rules and What Is True About Them" (PDF)
- Rose - "Writing Around Rules" (PDF)
- *Content Rules* Chapter 6 excerpt - “What do I talk about when there's nothing to talk about?”

*Friday March 15<sup>th</sup> - Blog post #5 due*

## **Week 10 (March 19 & 21) – Narrative & Conferences**

**Tues:** No class – Conferences

**Thurs:** No class - Conferences

**Due:** Second draft of narrative essay

*Friday March 22<sup>nd</sup> - Blog post #6 due*

## **Week 11 (March 26 & 28) – Persuasive Writing**

**Tues:** Examples of “A” Persuasive Essays from previous semesters

**Read:**

- At least 2 of the 4 essays posted, and come prepared with comments

**Thurs:** No Class – Instructor Away at Conference

**Due:** Rough Draft of Persuasive Essay

*Friday March 29<sup>th</sup> - Blog post #7 due*



**Week 12 (April 2 & 4) – Radical Revision**

**Tues:** Workshop Second Draft of Narrative Essay

**Thurs:** Style & Revision exercises

*Friday April 5<sup>th</sup> - Blog post #8 due*

**Week 13 (April 9 & 11) – Finessing**

**Tues:** Workshop Draft of Persuasive Essay

**Thurs:** No Class – Debate Prep

*Friday April 12<sup>th</sup> - Blog post #9 due*

**Week 14 (April 16 & 18) – Debates**

**Tues:** Partner groups 1 & 2 Debate

**Thurs:** Partner groups 3 & 4 Debate

*Friday April 19<sup>th</sup> – Blog post #10 due*

**Week 15 (April 23 & 25) - Debates**

**Tues:** Partner groups 5 & 6 Debate

**Thurs:** Partner groups 7 & 8 Debate

**Week 16 (April 30 & May 2) - Debates**

**Tues:** Partner groups 9 & 10 Debate

**Thurs:** No Class – Writing Day

**Final drafts of essays and reflective letter due to me by email no later than 7PM, May 9. LATE WORK WILL BE AN AUTOMATIC F. NO EXCEPTIONS, NO EXCUSES.**

# The Graphic Syllabus

## Advanced Writing

Course Goals

Write with purpose and clarity

Clearly express your position

Critical and creative thinking

Learning Objectives

Develop  
Stretch  
Revise

Expand  
Synthesize  
Evolve

Use  
Provide  
Differentiate  
Analyze

Teaching Method

Lecture  
Feedback  
Active

Active  
Reflection  
Lecture

Active

Activities & Assignments

Writing Assign.  
Workshops

Personal essay  
Reflective essay  
Blog

Persuasive essay  
Readings  
In-class writing  
Workshops