

Augsburg College, Department of English
English 111 (2008 TRI3-A): Effective Writing
Spring Tri3-A 2009: Saturday 8:00-12:00
Old Main 104

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Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 01:00-3:30 and by appointment

Required course texts and materials

- Ramage et al. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing*
- Marjane Satrapi *The Complete Persepolis*
- College Dictionary
- Note book for pre-writing and drafting practice

Course Description and Goals

The department of English at Augsburg College offers English 111 to its first-year students to equip them with critical thinking, reading and writing skills. Honing these abilities will enable you participate fully in the various facets of the communication-driven reality that is our modern-day society(ies)/culture(s). Whether what you wish to communicate is fact-based, informational matter, or your own subjectivity regarding an aspect of intellectual, physical, or emotional culture, your effectiveness, or lack thereof, will depend heavily on your capacity to “consume” textual material carefully and critically, and to “produce” clear, organized, and convincing written texts of your own. As the title, Effective Writing, suggests, this course is thus specifically designed to inculcate in you, as both reader and writer, a strong sensitivity to the different modes and purposes of written language in our cultures.

We shall read and write texts that are intended for different purposes and audiences. We will utilize the *process* approach to writing as a strategy for developing or enhancing the various competencies that are necessary for the production of well conceived, organized, and clearly articulated texts. The *process* approach will entail two modes of practice. First, it will entail that we practice writing constantly, during every class meeting, if possible, and during appropriate out-of-class times. The in-class writing exercises will be mainly devoted to the discovery or invention stage of the writing *process*, whereby we shall seek to release our latent creative juices through pre-writing exercises. Occasionally, we shall use in-class-writing sessions to begin drafting our papers. This way we shall mitigate one of the more perverse problems of the writing *process*: procrastinating with drafting. We will have to get used to the fact that most “completed” pieces of writing will, of necessity, have gone through two or three drafts, regardless of whether the writers involved are experienced wordsmiths or novice beginners. Secondly, the *process* approach will entail that we view our class as a community of readers and writers ready and willing to share our ideas about writing with one another.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Use a variety of methods to generate ideas
- Discover and develop a thesis statement
- Organize material using methods appropriate to purpose, content, and diverse audiences
- Use basic methods of coherence and transition
- Write papers relatively free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Complete successfully a research assignment
- Demonstrate an increasing ability to evaluate your own writing
- Read and analyze in writing one literary work assigned for its potential to challenge you in intellectual, aesthetic and cultural terms.

Group Work

Group work will be the mainstay instructional method for this class. There will be some lecturing, whole class discussions of course materials, and one-on-one conferences, as alternate instructional strategies, but we will spend most of the class time working on our writing in groups. You will be expected to participate actively in class discussions whether they involve the whole class or are limited to small groups. Always come to class prepared, either by completing assigned reading or assigned writing. In the small groups we will brainstorm writing topics, discuss pre-writings and drafts, and regularly exchange views and share ideas and guidance about writing. We will think of the writing *process* as proceeding from such pre-writing strategies as brainstorming, free-writing, and idea mapping, through drafting, revising, and, finally, editing and proofreading. We will strive to follow this linear ideal as a best practice approach.

Responsibilities of Group Members

As a member of a discussion group, you will always treat with seriousness your individual role in the collaborative tasks that the group will regularly engage with. During drafting workshops you will make enough copies of your draft available for all the members of your group, and be present and ready to read the papers of the other members of the group and offer advice and critiques accordingly. Failure to fulfill these requirements of group membership will negatively impact your final grade. You will also be expected to maintain a positive and collaborative attitude at all times. Mutual respect and empathy between group members are virtues whose importance in functional groups cannot be stressed too much.

Major Assignments

In the course of the semester, you will write a total of five (800-850 word) formal essays plus one fully documented (1000-1200) argument essay on a researched topic. You will also have an opportunity to revise one of your graded essays for a different (6th) grade. As a class, we will help you delineate your writing topics and render them treatable within the boundaries set by each assignment. Your ability to handle the assigned writing tasks will turn predominantly on three factors: your understanding of your subject and your relationship to it, your purpose in writing, and your awareness of your audience

Note on reading

All assigned reading must be completed before the scheduled class meeting. Students who do not complete their readings will experience difficulty in making contributions to class discussion, thus adversely affecting their participation rating. Every assigned text should be read more than once to facilitate participation in class discussion, and prepare for the writing assignments which will largely be responses to the readings.

Assessment

I will respond to your written work with comments and recommendations for improvement, and with a grade. However, you will be required to revise one of the essays for another grade. We will use the following grading scale.

Informative and Surprising essay	10%
Cause and Effect Essay	10%
Argument (Researched) essay	20%
Literary Analysis Essay	10%
Literacy Narrative	10%
Revision essay	10%
Quizzes	15%
Peer Review/Participation	15%

Attendance

Since your active participation in the class will be a crucial factor determining your success in the class, I will expect you to be here for every class meeting. Regular absenteeism will put your course grade in unnecessary jeopardy. There will be no excused absences. *A student who misses six class sessions or three workshop sessions will fail the course.* Attendance is particularly crucial on peer review days! Also be in class on time to hear the announcements that I normally make at the beginning of class.

On plagiarism

All the work you produce in this course must represent your own individual effort and ability to learn and to acquire prescribed skills. Do not claim someone else's work—intentionally or inadvertently—as your own. This is called plagiarism, and in academia it is regarded as a very serious violation of practice that is legal and moral. You will receive adequate guidance regarding this matter from the class discussions and from the class text. Remember this always: if you use somebody's idea, thought, suggestion, or word, you must acknowledge that person's contribution to your effort as explicitly as the relevant scholarly etiquette demands. Anything short of this is plagiarism and it must be avoided like the plague. In class, we will go over the different details of how borrowed materials can be properly incorporated into our writing, and I am positive that we will all conscientiously try to “do the right thing” regarding this matter.

Resources for Writers

The English department has an important resource for the students needing assistance with their writing beyond what they receive from the class. The Writing Lab is a place

where, as a registered student, you can receive individualized help with your writing. The lab is located in Lindell Library.

The Lindell Library

The LINDELL Library is an ultra-modern library on campus. You will do well to acquaint yourself fully with its operations. Part of our concerns in this class will be to find ways of taking full advantage of the facilities offered by the modern high-tech library in the American academy.

Tentative Schedule

In a comp class, tentativeness in the reading and discussion schedules does not necessarily mean lack of decisiveness. It is mostly a strategy for flexibility and adaptability. We will occasionally have to move topics forward or back as the situation might require. Of paramount importance in all this projected activity is our focus on the writing process, and on how each activity in the schedule contributes to our awareness of the evolving process. Assignment sheets for major essays will specify due dates.

(9/20): Informative/ Exposition

Summary of the common view (req. not graded)
Summary of the surprising view (req. not graded)
Peer review

(10/04): Argument/Persuasion

Formulating an argument: Claim with and/without reason

10/11: Argument/Persuasion

Anticipating and addressing counterarguments
Peer review
Library session

10/25: Cause and Effect (Analysis)

Style in prose
Summary of a common view
Summary of a surprising view

11/08: Literacy Narrative

Description
Peer review

11/22: Evaluation (literary analysis: *Persepolis*)

Literacy Narrative Paper Due

Peer review

Revised version of an essay (12/06)

Literary Analysis essay due

Recapitulations; conclusion

