

English 315—Advanced Composition Spring 2004

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Catalogue Description

“English 315—Advanced Composition (3 Credits): Writing of essays with an emphasis on rhetorical and stylistic methods, structure, and voice. Entry requirements: Eng 100/ESL100 or consent of instructor.”

Course Goals and Objectives

Among other things, this course focuses on teaching students to do the following:

1. Read and Interpret Complex (and Subtle) Arguments in Various Kinds of Texts
2. Adequately Summarize Complex Arguments in Writing and Speaking
3. Learn to Use Complex Argumentative Skills in One's writing
4. Utilize Different Elements of Style in One's writing
5. Generate Effective and Complex Ideas
6. Construct Argumentative and Descriptive Texts for Intended Audiences
6. Master College-Level Research and Library Skills
7. Work Efficiently and Productively in Groups
8. Revise and Edit Essays by Writing Multiple Drafts

Required Course Texts and Supplies(Available at Campus Bookstore)

- 1). Andrea Lunsford, et al. *Everything's an Argument*. 2nd Edition. (Bedford)
- 2). Teresa Thonney. *Qualities of Good Prose*. (Longman)
- 3). Assortment of Readings via WebCT (Free of Charge)
- 4). A book of your choice that you either purchase or check-out from library, or procure through inter- or intra-library loan. (See Details Below)

Graded Course Assignments and Work

Class Participation	10%
Short Take-Home Test	15%
Essay One (Rough Draft)	10%
Essay One (Final Draft)	20%
Book Review	15%
Essay Two (Rough Draft)	10%
Essay Two (Final Draft)	20%

Grading Scale

There is no curve in this course. All individual assignments as well as the final course grade will be scored numerically. Below are the grading categories that will be used in this course.

A	94-100
A-	90-93

B+	88-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	0-59

Course Assignments and Work

Below are rough descriptions of course work this semester. Students will be given further information and more detailed instructions about all below assignments during later class sessions.

1). Class Participation/Attendance (10%)

For the most part “class participation” means that students should take part in class discussions whenever possible, work productively and smoothly with other students, and be engaged in all class activities both oral and written. However, class participation also means having a good attitude about what goes on in class, e.g., no complaining, sleeping, working on other course assignments, and/or reading newspapers, magazines, etc. Students must also show respect for the diversity of voices and opinions that arise during class conversations. Though there is room for differences of opinion, students must be polite at all times and respect all others around them.

This course is not a lecture course. It depends in large part upon student participation and in-class work; therefore, attendance is both mandatory and expected. Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Absences in excess of two will count against a student’s final grade—1/2 letter grade for each absence after the second.

If a true emergency exists in your life such as an illness, you may have an absence excused if documented by a doctor’s note. Officially sponsored university events also count as “excused” absences when accompanied by documentation from the proper university office.

2). Short Take-Home Test (15%)

The first major assignment for the course will be a short-take home test—comprised of short-response essays—that ask students to apply their knowledge of argumentative concepts, terms, and principles they have learned about during the first 1/3 of the course. The take-home test will likely be given during the fifth week of class.

3). Essay One--“Writing a Place ” (Draft One 10%; Draft Two 20%)

Essay one asks students to read and write essays that describe and analyze a significant “place” in the world. Students may or may not write about a place as it relates to their own lives and experiences; however, in each case, students will write an argumentative (nonfiction) essay that provides descriptive details of this place and show its importance and significance to a select audience. This essay will be formulated in large part from an understanding of key rhetorical and stylistic terms and concepts gathered in assigned readings and class discussions.

Because good writing necessitates strong revision skills, this writing assignment (as well as the second writing assignment) will be written as a series of drafts, two of which will count as a significant portion of students’ final grades. Draft one will be

submitted to both the instructor and student peer-reviewers to receive significant comments and advice for revision. Students then will extensively revise their essays for a final grade.

4). Book Review (15%)—4-5 Pages

Another major assignment for this course will be a scholarly book review. This means that students will write a review of a book of their choice. This review, however, will not simply “summarize” the book but will trace out the details of the book’s argument—including a look at, for instance, the argumentative strategies the author uses and the particular methodologies and disciplinary perspectives from which the book is written. Students may, additionally, offer scholarly critiques as well.

A couple of caveats: the book must fall within the purview of the course topic at hand and must be scholarly to some degree (the book review will be due late in the semester and thus will be one whose subject matter relates to the second essay). A list of potential books to use in this assignment will be provided during the second or third week of class, and a more detailed description of the assignment will also be provided at a later date.

Students should make sure to choose a book that fits well with their research interests, one that will help them prepare for their course essay. After selecting a text, students might purchase this text from an online book store, the Hilo Borders (if available, call first), or acquire the text via intra- or inter-library loan. Availability of potential texts will vary, so make sure to allow yourself plenty of time to acquire the book you wish to review. This assignment coincides directly with Essay Two.

5). Essay Two--“Writing in a Visual World” (Draft One 10%; Draft Two 20%)

Essay two is similar to Essay one in that it asks students to read and analyze texts that relate to the topic (in this case “Visual Culture,” or what it means to live in visual culture). In other words, it looks at how people, identities, and cultures are shaped by our visual landscape, a society inundated with images on TV, in movies, on billboards, on the internet, and so on and so forth. This unit asks students to construct an argument to a specific audience about some aspect of our visual—or media-saturated—culture. For instance, students might examine how our “image culture” affects our perception of material goods, or how we understand different societies we see on the news, or how and why many individuals become increasingly obsessed with their appearances.

This Essay, however, does differ slightly from Essay one in that it invites students to position their arguments more specifically within a current debate about “visual culture” taking place in various public forums such as newspapers, magazines, and websites, for instance. Thus, students will rely upon outside texts as they write their argumentative essays. This assignment affords students the opportunity to think closely about how to make effective claims, support these claims with good reasons, and direct these claims and reasons successfully to a specific audience. It also asks students to supplement their texts with the voices of relevant authors by quoting, citing, and documenting them properly in their own texts. Library research will be necessary in

order to complete this assignment. The book chosen for the “book review” assignment above should be one that helps students compose this essay.

Like Essay one, students will submit a first draft (10% of the final course grade), receive significant feedback from the instructor and peer-reviewers, and submit a final second draft (20% of final course grades).

Late Work

Work submitted more than one-day late will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Work submitted one-day late will be accepted with a slight penalty: an automatic one-grade reduction. If some emergency or crisis develops, it may be possible to receive an extension on an assignment. However, extensions will only be granted if students contact the instructor at least 2 days before the assignment is due.

WebCT (Web Course Tools)

As the university moves toward greater reliance on “paper-less” classrooms, this course too will utilize WebCT (Web Course Tools) as a means by which the instructor will distribute information to students: information about assignments, readings, and other course proceedings. A variety of course readings, as well, will be available via WebCT. A variety of class discussion, as well, will also take place through WebCT. Thus, in order to succeed in this course it is crucial that students create a WebCT account as soon as possible and keep up with new postings on WebCT too.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism happens when you use the words, phrases, and/or ideas of another person without properly citing and acknowledging them, and, in short, plagiarism is intellectual theft and academic dishonesty, according to the University of Hawaii at Hilo Student Code of Conduct. It is not acceptable in any way whatsoever and will be punished with, at least, failure of the assignment, though in many cases academic dishonesty such as plagiarism is grounds for failure of the course and/or dismissal from the university.

Some Final Reminders:

1. This course works on the assumption that writing is a “process.” Therefore, your writing assignments will develop through multiple drafts, peer reviews, and individual discussions with the instructor.
2. All out-of-class writing must be of professional caliber. That is, since students all have access to computers and printers, there should be no reason you cannot produce high-quality work.
3. You will be given more than enough opportunities to work with me and your classmates on each assignment. Therefore, your final graded works will be the product of much attention. This can only enhance your ability to earn higher grades, unless you fail to make the effort in your writing processes.
4. My office hours are set up for you. Please do not hesitate to stop by or set up an appointment to meet with me, whether to discuss your writing, the readings, or any other aspect of the course. No question is too minor or trivial to ask. I’ll be very happy to meet with you about any questions!