English 208 | Mr. Stitt | Fall 2020

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# Course Description & Objectives

This is a class in English composition, rhetoric, and rational thinking. The class requires that you write clearly and well, that you seek the truth through careful inquiry and sound reasoning, and that you attempt to lead others to the truth (or at least what you determine to be most likelyto be the truth) in a lucid, persuasive way. In this class you will write five fully developed essays using a variety of rhetorical strategies.

The grades you receive on assignments will reflect the quality of both your writing and your thinking. Essays that lack well-reasoned and well-developed content will not be acceptable in this course, even if mechanically and grammatically flawless.

Successful English 208 students will show a high degree of competence in Standard English. They will be able to construct an original thesis; to read, observe, and think critically; to organize their thoughts and words and sentences into a coherent pattern; to follow MLA and APA format; to implement a variety of research techniques; to support assertions with evidence; to think and write logically; to recognize logical fallacies and abstain from them; to employ quantitative and scientific evidence; to display a subtle understanding of opposing points of view; to avoid facile generalizations; to be (for the most part) intolerant of clichés; and to pay extremely close attention to detail.

## Texts

1. *A Writer’s Reference*, 9th edition. Diana Hacker. Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2018. (Note that we won’t be using the customized BSC version of the book. You need to have the complete edition.)

2. Handouts and web resources, including access to a functioning printer.

## Attendance

If you are not in class when the roll is called, *or if you leave class or disrupt class*, you will be counted absent. You are allowed three absences without penalty. Each absence after the third will cause your final average to drop by a letter grade.

Normally I treat absences as if they were sick days and don’t excuse absences except for jury duty, military service, and BSC-sponsored activities about which I am notified beforehand. Given the current virus situation, though, I am of course excusing all absences for people who are symptomatic. Don’t come to class sick! Do, though, e-mail me to let me know what is going on. Do keep up with the coursework as best you can.

Be aware that you are responsible for anything that goes on or that is announced in class, even if you are absent. Failing to follow assignment specifications announced in class (a revised word-count requirement for a paper, say, or a revised due date) will not be excused because you were not present when the announcement was made. If you miss class, check with me or another student to find out what you have missed.

## Late Papers, Missed Drafts, and Checking E-mail Regularly

A paper not turned in during the class meeting in which it is due will be penalized a letter grade—and will be penalized an additional 10% for *each calendar day* it is late.

Barring circumstances resembling the apocalyptic, late rough drafts will receive no credit. If you must be absent when a rough draft is due, be sure to turn it in early.

*Check your e-mail regularly.* It’s the best way to get in touch with me, and you need to check your e-mail to stay up to date in the course.

## Course Grade

Essays 1 and 2 are worth 10%. Essays 3–5 are worth 20% each. Quizzes are worth 10%. The final exam, which will resemble a review quiz more than a full-blown exam, is worth 10%. Rough drafts and other daily grades will be incorporated into essay grades. Letter grades are as follows:

A: 93–100 A-: 90–92

B+: 87–89 B: 83–86 B-: 80–82

C+: 77–79 C: 73–76 C-: 70–82

D+: 67–69 D: 60–66

F: < 59

Please note the last day to drop a course with tuition adjustment (Sept. 14), the last day to drop without a grade (Sept. 21), and the last day to drop with a grade of “W” (Oct. 9).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism—which entails using the words *or ideas* of another person without giving that person proper credit—will not be allowed in this course. This means that you must know how to use quotation marks appropriately, how to cite appropriately, and how to summarize and paraphrase appropriately. We will be covering quotation, citation, summary, and paraphrase in class, and you will be responsible for understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. If you are *ever* unsure about whether or not a particular passage might be an instance of plagiarism, ask me about the passage before you turn in your assignment. If I am not available for the asking, it would be wise to err on the side of caution, caution, caution. If in doubt, quote. If in doubt, cite.

Plagiarists will face one or more of the following consequences: a grade of “0” on the plagiarized assignment, a grade of “F” for the course, being reported for a violation of the BSC honor code.

General Classroom Ethics

Be polite. Be respectful. Avoid behaviors that distract other people. There will be no sleeping, *no use of cell phones or any other electronic devices* without special permission from me, no wandering off for refreshments, no cigars, and no weird noises.

Also be aware that you need to come to class prepared to be intellectually engaged for extended periods of time. *This class is not designed to occupy you with busywork or distract you with bright and shiny images.* We will be talking about reasoning, fallacious thinking, causality, arguments about principles, lucidity of expression, specific illustrative examples (concerning history and science and politics and philosophy), and other topics that are sometimes described as dry but should not be so described by someone claiming to pursue a substantive education. If you are not sure you can approach such material with a sense of curiosity, *you should drop the course*.

Not complying with the above will result in being penalized with one or more absences, which can end up having a highly negative effect on your final grade (see attendance policy above).

The Fact That I Am Not Your Keeper

If you stop coming to class or don’t turn in assignments, it is not my responsibility to track you down or to remind you that late assignments and absences can do severe damage to your grade. If you need help, ask for it. I’m extremely helpful. But I also despise paternalism and the infantilization of the American college student. Assume that I will treat you as a competent, reasonably well-functioning adult.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**Aug 24** Writing sample. Course and syllabus overview.

**Aug 26** Claims & Reasons, Skeptics & Believers, Facts & Opinions, Truth & Consequences.

**Aug 31** Evidence. Audience.Hacker, 78–91. Writing a short research paper.

**Sept 2** Organizing an essay. Introduction to research. Hacker, 362–432.

**Sept 7** Grammar and punctuation review. Hacker, 170-302.

**Sept 9** Rough draft of essay #1 is due.

**Sept 14 ESSAY #1 IS DUE.** Introduction to Essay #2. Writing about a continuum. **The last day to drop with tuition adjustment is September 14.**

**Sept 16**Writing about a continuum continued.

**Sept 21** Deduction and induction. **The last day to drop without a grade is September 21.**

**Sept 23** Logical fallacies.

**Sept 28** Rough draft of essay #2 is due.

**Sept 30** **ESSAY #2 IS DUE.** Introduction to Essay #3. Abstract arguments.

**Oct 5** Essay #3 continued.

**Oct 7** More on fallacies.

**(The last day to drop with a grade of “W” is October 9.)**

**Oct 12** Rough draft of essay #3 is due.

**Oct 14 ESSAY #3 IS DUE.** Introduction to Essay #4. Writing in the natural and social sciences.

**Oct 19** APA. Hacker, 443–497.

**Oct 21** Prose style and sentence variation.

**Oct 26** Rough draft of essay #4 is due.

**Oct 28 ESSAY #4 IS DUE.** Introduction to Essay #5. Finding a topic worth writing about.

**Nov 2** Writing as discovery. Writing engaging academic prose.

**Nov 4** Usage errors. Hacker 141–150.

**Nov 9** Half draft of Essay #5 is due.

**Nov 11** Draft of Essay #5 is due.

**Nov 16** Final exam review. **ESSAY #5 IS DUE.**

**Nov 18** **LAST DAY OF CLASS. FINAL EXAM.**