English 101 | Mr. Stitt | Fall 2020

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# Course Description and Objectives

This class covers writing and reasoning. It requires that you write clearly and well, that you read the writing of others in a deliberate and thoughtful way, and that you exhibit sound skills in analysis and argumentation. The grades you receive on assignments will reflect the quality of both your writing and your thinking.

Successful English 101 students will write with facility in Standard American English. They will also be able to construct an original thesis; to read perceptively; to analyze evidence; to support assertions with evidence; to structure a piece of writing in a well-organized way; to implement a variety of research techniques; to display a subtle understanding of opposing points of view; to avoid facile generalizations; to follow MLA format; to avoid clichés; and to pay 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. Rough drafts will be turned in by e-mail on the day they are due. These will be the same days we do virtual peer review.

*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

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Assignment 1: 10%

Assignment 2: 10%

Assignment 3: 15%

Assignment 4: 20%

Assignment 5: 25%

Daily Grades and Quizzes: 10%

Final Exam: 10% (🡨This will resemble a review quiz more than a full-blown exam.)

Rough drafts 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-: 70–72

D+: 67–69 D: 60–66

F: < 59

Please make note of 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. Risking your grade and college career to avoid having to do a tiny bit more typing is not a wise decision.

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.

Visiting the Writing Center

You will need to make three appointments in the Writing Center over the course of the term, and I might sometimes send you to the Writing Center to work on a particular assignment or writing skill. If you only go to two appointments, your final grade will drop by a letter grade. If you only go to one, it will drop by two. If you don’t go to any, it will drop by three.

Do not get the idea that you should stop going to the Writing Center after three appointments. Work on your writing with good writers as often as you can.

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 college 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 25** Writing sample. Course and syllabus overview.

**Aug 27** “One Thing I Would Change about the World.” Defending a claim. Writing a unified paragraph. Grammar and punctuation review. Hacker, pp. 42–54, 171–218.

**Sept 1** Grammar and punctuation review continued. Hacker, pp. 259–325.

**Sept 3** Rough draft of Assignment #1 is due. Virtual workshop. **QUIZ** on grammar and punctuation.

**Sept 8** **ASSIGNMENT #1 IS DUE.** Annotation and critical reading. Summary and analysis. Brief review of MLA citations and plagiarism. Hacker pp. 363–432.

**Sept 10** Common usage errors. Hacker pp. 141–150.

**(Sept. 14 is the last day to drop with tuition adjustment.)**

**Sept 15**Draft of assignment #2 (summary paragraph) is due. **QUIZ** on usage errors.

**Sept 17** **ASSIGNMENT #2 IS DUE.** Writing a short argument. Thesis sentences, introductions, and conclusions.

**(Sept. 21 is the last day to drop without a grade.)**

**Sept 22** Research in depth. Plagiarism review. Hacker 363–432.

**Sept 24** Organization, paragraphing, and topic sentences. Hacker pp. 3–31. Clauses, comma splices, fused sentences, and sentence fragments. Hacker pp. 3–31, 207–218.

**Sept 29** Deduction and induction.

**Oct 1** Rough draft of Assignment #3 (short argument) is due. **QUIZ** on deduction and induction.

**Oct 6 ASSIGNMENT #3 IS DUE.** Writing a research paper. Argument at 30,000 Feet.

**Oct 8** Evidence and audience. Agreement errors. Hacker pp. 171**–**179.

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

**Oct 13** **QUIZ** on agreement errors. Virtual day on sentence variation and rules that aren’t real.

**Oct 15** Logical fallacies.

**Oct 20** Half draft of Assignment #4 (research paper) is due. **QUIZ** on logical fallacies.

**Oct 22** Full draft of Assignment #4 (research paper) is due.

**Oct 27** **ASSIGNMENT #4 IS DUE.** Introduction to assignment #5.

**Oct 29** Assignment #5 continued.

**Nov 3** Prose style and sentence variation. Hacker pp. 141–150.

**Nov 5** Logical fallacies continued.

**Nov 10** Half draft of Assignment #5 (research paper) is due. **QUIZ** on logical fallacies.

**Nov 12** Full draft of Assignment #5 (research paper) is due.

**Nov 17** Final exam review. **ASSIGNMENT #5 IS DUE.**

**Nov 19** Last day of class. **FINAL EXAM.**

**ASSIGNMENT 1: One Thing I Would Change about the World, *OR* One Thing from the Past We Need to Recapture (10% of final grade)**

**~300 words, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, MLA format**

Write a paragraph naming one thing you would like to change about the world or about the United States. Alternatively, you can write a paragraph arguing for something from the past that has been lost or diminished and that needs to be recaptured.

Make your claim in the first sentence of the paragraph. Defend it in as much detail as possible in the next several sentences. End the paragraph with a sentence that gives your readers a sense of resolution or a newly clarified perspective on things.

You do not have to make an original claim, but if you avoid obvious answers you might well make your writing more interesting. The pageant contestant who wishes for “world peace” is a cliché for a reason. Good ways to be less obvious are to be more specific (banning U.S. drone strikes in Yemen) or to pick something less obvious (spending time talking with family on the front porch or stoop).

**ASSIGNMENT 2: Summary Paragraph (10% of final grade)**

**~300 words, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, MLA format**

Find a short piece of writing that makes a claim and provides evidence to back it up. Summarize the argument in one paragraph, mimicking its content and structure.

Your readers should be able to know what the main claim is. They should know what sort of evidence is used to back it up. They should be able to perceive the form in which the evidence is laid out.

In your search for arguments, you will likely find some that are incoherent, some that at least insinuate a claim but support the claim with nothing outside of sarcasm and in-group virtue signaling, and some that have no structure because they consist solely of repeating the claim multiple times using different words. Trying to summarize pseudo-arguments like these will make your life more difficult than it needs to be. Do yourself a favor and find an argument worth summarizing.

**ASSIGNMENT #3: Short Argument (15%)**

**2+ sources, 900-1,200 words, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, MLA format**

     Respond to one of the prompts or questions below in an essay of 900 to 1,200 words. Your essay should include the following: (1) a brief introduction that begins with a hook and ends with a thesis sentence, (2) at least two body paragraphs, and (3) a brief conclusion that begins with a reworded thesis and ends with something thoughtful or vivid. Make your thesis specific and decisive. Support it with detailed evidence and rigorous argumentation. If quantitative evidence is needed, be sure to include it.

**1.** Are school uniforms a good idea?

**2.** Is it wrong to buy products made in sweatshops?

**3.** Should some books be banned?

**4.** Name a company that poses a threat (involving freedom, privacy, health, whatever) to the public and show that the threat is significant. **4a.** Alternatively, defend a company that is a frequent target of criticism.

**5.** Should parents use corporal punishment to discipline their children?

**6.** Has increased exposure to digital media had negative psychological effects? (Issues you can consider here might be depression, anxiety, attention span, construal levels, empathy, a need for constant validation, dopamine-related technology addiction, and dependency on high levels of sensory stimulation.)

**7.** Is homework beneficial? (In your argument, be specific about the amount of homework, if any, that is desirable. Be specific about grade level as well.)

**8.** In the debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois over how to achieve racial equality, which man made the better case?

**ASSIGNMENT 4: Research Paper (20%)**

**4+ sources (2+ print), 1,100-1,500 words, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, MLA format**

     Respond to one of the prompts or questions below in an essay of 1,100 to 1,500 words. Your essay should include the following: (1) a brief introduction that begins with a hook and ends with a thesis sentence, (2) at least three body paragraphs, and (3) a brief conclusion that begins with a reworded thesis and ends with something thoughtful or vivid. Make your thesis specific and decisive. Support it with detailed evidence and rigorous argumentation. If quantitative evidence is needed, be sure to include it.

**1.** Who is the best candidate to vote for in 2020? (Either choose from candidates currently running or defend a decision not to vote. Avoid whimsical write-in options along the lines of Mickey Mouse, George Washington, Jeb Bush, Beyoncé, Chelsea Clinton, Professor Dumbledore, or Giant Meteor.)

**2.** Should the U.S. federal government fund the National Endowment for the Arts? (You can replace the NEA with public broadcasting if you like.)

**3.** Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan believed government had an interest in supporting “public architecture of lasting quality.” Was he right?

**4.** Should [name a sport here] be banned because of health or safety concerns?

**5.** Is being a vegetarian/vegan (🡨pick one) the right dietary choice in terms of health and ethics?

**6.** Are psychotropic medications overprescribed?

**7.** Is automation a serious threat to American workers?

**8.** What should be done to improve the material conditions of working-class Americans? (You will primarily be looking at lowering unemployment and increasing income here, but you can also address issues such as healthcare and housing if you find them significant.)

**9.** On balance, has geographic mobility been beneficial to the United States, or has it harmed regions of the country and weakened our sense of community?

**ASSIGNMENT 5: Research Paper (25%)**

**5+ sources (3+ print), 1,200-1,700 words, 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, MLA format**

     Respond to one of the prompts or questions below in an essay of 1,200 to 1,700 words. Your essay should include the following: (1) a brief introduction that begins with a hook and ends with a thesis sentence, (2) at least four body paragraphs, and (3) a brief conclusion that begins with a reworded thesis and ends with something thoughtful or vivid. Make your thesis specific and decisive. Support it with detailed evidence and rigorous argumentation. If quantitative evidence is needed, be sure to include it.

**1.** Is it better to pursue a policy of free trade—unilaterally if necessary—or better to use protectionism as leverage in trade negotiations or as a means of protecting economic self-sufficiency and domestic industry?

**2.** To what degree are personality traits hereditary? (The best way to deal with this question in a precise way is to use the Big Five personality traits, also called the five-factor model. The five-factor model measures openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.)

**3.** In 1945, President Harry Truman ordered the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Was this the right decision? If not, what would the ideal course of action have been?

**4.** Why do women live longer than men?

**5.** Should industrial farming be replaced by sustainable (or organic) agriculture?

**6.** Does religion have an effect on ethical behavior? (Be sure to look for concrete evidence on this question rather than relying on arguments based on intuition and anecdotes. Look for studies. Use statistical evidence.)

**7.** What explains sex differences in rates of mental illness and suicide? (Note that this is a complicated question because women are more likely to be diagnosed with mental illness while men are more likely to commit suicide.)

**8.** How can cities promote economic development without causing the negative effects associated with gentrification?

**9.** Is there a relationship between creativity and mental illness?

**10.** Who was the greatest military commander in history? (To do this topic well, you will need to defend your selection by comparing the commander you choose with two or three other strong selections.)