English 1301-Rhetoric & Composition 1

Section 04 | TR 10:50-12:05 | ELABS 246

Many students entering college discover that there is a gap between the reading and writing skills they developed in high school or in the working world and those that are needed in college. Whether this gap is a trickling stream for you or a formidable gulf, we will build a bridge in English 1301 into academic reading, writing and thinking.

Stefanie Herweck

Email: stefanie.herweck@utrgv.edu

Office: ELABS 245

Office hours: MW 12:15-1:15
T 12:30-2:00
and by appointment

Course details, assignments, and your grades will be found on Blackboard.

What’s in this syllabus:
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In a nutshell, this class is about writing as inquiry. We’ll read a lot, talk a lot, write about our ideas and other people’s ideas, share our writing and feedback in workshops, and revise (which is not editing) a lot. And I hope the direction of the class is driven as much by your interests and questions as it is by mine.

From this point forward, then, I’d like you to begin to think of yourselves as writers. Every one of us will have something important to contribute to our discussions, and I am looking forward to talking with you, helping you, and learning from you. It is important to me that you feel comfortable sharing your ideas, even when they’re different from others in the class (yes, even mine). I intend to treat you with respect, and I expect that you will do the same for me and for each other.

Because of my experiences writing and teaching writing, I have learned that you can learn a great deal from reading and responding to others’ writing, so the networks you form will be an integral component of the class. You will often work in groups, reading each other’s writing and commenting on it, sharing ideas from homework, and things like that. This work is designed to give each of you an opportunity to get a fresh pair of eyes, to get feedback and response from others who may not see the same things you do or respond to the words in the ways that you had expected. I expect each of you to take this work seriously and to give your peers the respect they deserve. I don’t know anyone who couldn’t benefit from constructive feedback and from talking through his/her ideas, so this will hopefully be a part of the course that you

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**Optimize**

The number of office hour visits students make during the course of the semester is positively correlated with academic performance. In other words, visiting your professors in office hours can equal higher grades. You will be able to visit for extra credit at some points during the semester.
will come to appreciate and even enjoy.

This course isn’t designed to make you a perfect writer by the end of the semester. It is designed to help you become more reflective and thoughtful about your writing, about why you write and how. What we hope to do in the Writing Program at UTRGV is to give you some strategies for dealing with writing tasks and to give you some opportunities to experiment with those strategies and to take some risks in an environment that is encouraging, constructively critical, and ultimately helpful. Hopefully, you’ll end up finding that writing can be a way of understanding yourselves and others and of communicating ideas in meaningful ways that can have tangible effects on your lives both as an individual and as a part of a larger social group.

I look forward to working with you, learning from you, and creating a space in 1301 where good writing and intriguing learning can happen.

Have a look at what you’re being asked to learn in this class below.

**Interrelated Goals for Writing Program Classes**

**Background**

To ensure consistency in instructional approaches throughout Texas public institutions, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board devised in 1998 exemplary objectives for all courses required in universities’ core curricula. Institutions throughout the state, including UTPA, have used the THECB exemplary objectives to define objectives for required core curriculum courses. In addition, all UTPA major programs of study now have Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which promote consistency and accountability in preparation of majors. Finally, within each program, individual courses have objectives that reflect accepted theories, content, and practice in that discipline. This section of your syllabus also demonstrates how these various sets of goals are implemented in your specific English 1301 course through your instructor’s course objectives.

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Objectives for Communication**

1. To understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation.
2. To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.
3. To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expositive, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive in written, visual, and oral communication.
4. To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
5. To understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.
6. To develop the ability to research and write a documented paper and/or to give an oral presentation.

Student Learning Outcomes for the Writing Program

The following statements describe what we want our students to know, think/value, and do when they finish the First-Year Writing Program and successfully complete 1302 with a "C" or better.

1. Students use the writing process to compose with purpose, creating multimodal texts for various audiences. (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #1, 2, 3)
2. Students productively interact with their peers, often in small groups, in the reiterative processes of feedback, revision, and editing. (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #1, 4)
3. Students think critically about their position in the context of a larger ongoing conversation about the issues they are investigating. (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #4 and 5)
4. Students find, evaluate, meaningfully integrate, and correctly document appropriate sources for research. (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #5 and 6)
5. Students are aware of the choices writers make and gain confidence in their ability to employ that awareness for a variety of future writing tasks. (corresponds with THECB Communication Objectives #1-6)
English 1301 Course Goals

English 1301 is designed to help students:

1. See that writing is an opportunity for learning (THECB 1-6; WPSLO 1-5);
2. Develop an understanding of writing as an interactive and recursive process (THECB 1, 4; WPSLO 1, 3);
3. Become reflective writers, aware of the rhetorical choices writers make (THECB 1-3, 5, 6; WPSLO 1-5);
4. Identify their own purposes for writing (THECB 2; WPSLO 1, 3);
5. Develop their abilities to write in a variety of genres appropriate for their audience and purpose (THECB 2, 3; WPSLO 1);
6. Become actively engaged readers, able to use multiple reading strategies for a variety of complex texts, including their own (THECB 5, 6; WPSLO 2-4);
7. Learn how to interact productively with their peers throughout the writing process (THECB 4; WPSLO 2);
8. Know how to use various types of feedback (teacher, peer, self-assessment) to revise their texts effectively (THECB 1, 4; WPSLO 2);
9. Gain more confidence in their abilities to engage in future writing tasks successfully (THECB 5; WPSLO 5);
10. Use technology in their writing in rhetorically effective ways (THECB 1, 3, 5, 6; WPSLO 1-5);
11. Learn about and effectively use the conventions of writing that govern a given writing situation (THECB 2, 3, 5; WPSLO 1, 4); and
12. Understand the rhetorical implications of writing style and grammatical conventions for a given writing situation (THECB 1; WPSLO 1, 4).

Optimize

Research has shown that retention is better if you review a lecture or study content within 24 hours of class. You may want to set up a study schedule in which you work on assignments in the afternoon or evening on the same day you have class rather than waiting until the evening before your next class.
Requirements

- Daily access to a reliable computer with internet and a word processor.
- Access to Blackboard Learn, where you will find class materials and get and submit assignments.
- A UTRGV email account and participation in our class Yammer group, so that you can receive updates and communicate with your fellow students.
- A dedicated notebook or computer file/document in which to record notes, ideas and insights from this class, as well as the notes you will take on your research topic.
- A dedicated folder in which to keep class readings, research documents, printed drafts, feedback forms and graded homework. You are required to keep up with all these materials through the semester.
- A package of dry erase markers to contribute to the studio.
- Recommended: Bring a laptop or tablet to class as time will be allotted for in-class work on writing assignments, and typing is often more.

Readings

You will need to have copies of the following readings printed out by the third day of class. You must bring paper copies of all the articles to each class. You may find the articles under Course Readings in Blackboard and print them using your credits in the lab or library. [NOTE: these source citations are in correct MLA format the way they would appear in a Works Cited page.]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc

With this video talk you might begin to challenge your assumptions about yourself and your capabilities.

The first scholarly article we’ll read. We’ll use it to practice strategies for reading challenging works. It will also serve as a statement of *theory* behind the practice of peer review, in other words, an exploration of the reasons we do peer review in this class and how you can expect to benefit from it.


This is the first full-length scholarly article we will read, and you will want to give yourself plenty of time to work through it. Many students find it eye-opening to discover that there are whole other levels of reading ability to work toward and practical ways to get there.


Another longer scholarly article that will help you understand the variety of ways that scholars use sources. The article is based around two examples—a student who has a limited view of how to use the work of other authors and one who looks for angles that will allow her to put herself in conversation with other authors. Spending some time digesting the strategy presented here will make your researched essay better.


A short, reflective, and funny piece about how to get started. Very motivating for getting ourselves to “just write.”


A practical article written to show teachers how to teach their students to give meaningful feedback to their peers. You will appreciate its advice when giving feedback to your fellow students.


Similar in form to Haas and Flower’s study of readers, Sommers analyzes and compares the strategies of student writers and experienced writers. Absorbing the ideas in this article will push
you to make your revisions deeper, to shift your focus from making superficial changes to enhancing the meaning of your writing.

Work and Grades

Writing Portfolio (50%)

This semester, you will be working towards the creation of a writing portfolio that contains the stages of what amounts to a single project. You will work on it through a series of distinct writing assignments that allow you reflect on and develop (adapt, change and/or tweak) your ideas throughout the course of semester. Graphically, it looks like this. The arrows represent the ideas you choose to bring with you from one assignment to the next.

One of my main goals when I teach writing is to help you develop a sense that your writing is a work in progress. When you turn in the drafts of your portfolio assignments, I will be giving you feedback rather than assigning a grade. You will be re-thinking and re-writing parts or all of every piece of writing based on this feedback and the feedback you get from your peers. As you write and re-write, you will want to keep track of all the feedback you receive, the revision and editing changes you make, and each successive draft, so that you are able to reflect on that progress in your final paper. As we near the end of the semester, we will analyze and discuss the portfolio rubric that I will use to figure your portfolio grade.
Daily Work (30%)

This semester you will be assigned daily work such as reading responses and in-class writings which will be evaluated and assigned grades according to a daily work rubric:

100% Your work is complete, insightful and goes beyond the obvious.

85% Your work is complete and correct, but you need to dig for deeper for more insights.

70% Your work has fulfilled the assignment, but you have the wrong idea about something or have not made enough effort.

50% Your work is incomplete.

0% You have not fulfilled the assignment. Any daily work not turned in on time is also zero. Multiple zeroes have a negative impact on your average and may result in failure of the class.

Participation (20%)

To encourage you to come to class prepared and ready to participate, I take participation grades on a regular basis. This could consist of checking that you have completed a draft or a response, or giving you credit for group work.
Because your course grade depends heavily on your portfolio, the grade calculation you see in the Blackboard gradebook only accounts for 50% of your grade. **Throughout the semester, I will send out early warning notices if you are in danger of not passing the course at that time.** However, if you’d like to know some specifics and/or an estimated grade at any point during the semester, just see me in office hours or ask for a meeting with me. There is no need for you to be surprised by your final course grade even though I do not put grades on individual projects. It is your responsibility to keep up with this and to see me if you’re curious or concerned, and it’s important that you not wait until the last week or so to start asking about grades as it may be too late at that point for you to do what needs to be done to significantly raise your overall course grade.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If do not have a complete portfolio at semester’s end, you will not receive a passing portfolio grade (50% of final grade).

### Important Policies

**Attendance and Drop by Instructor Policy:**

Because the quality of your writing so largely depends on your interaction with your peers and with me, *it’s important that you participate every class day.* Since I assign grades almost every day, you are almost certain to suffer grade-wise if you have too many absences.

If you miss more than 2 weeks of classes (4 days), I will ask you to drop the course.

UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact me in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work.

**Punctuality and Use of Class Time:**

Please be considerate of our classroom space and make every effort to get here on time. *Arriving more than 10 minutes late counts as an absence.* I have asked students to drop based on habitual lateness.

Sometimes restroom breaks are unavoidable, but I ask that you plan ahead and keep them to a minimum to avoid disrupting your learning and that of your classmates.
Cell Phones:
You will spend a lot of time generating ideas in this class, and I have found that checking phones and receiving texts is disruptive to students’ thinking. I ask that all phones be put away unless you are using it for class purposes.

Late Work:
Late work is too difficult to keep track of, so I don’t accept it. I will be giving a lot of feedback over the course of this semester, so I won’t be able to keep track of your work if you turn it in late, and much of your work requires getting others’ feedback before moving on to the next activity, so some things can’t really be made up anyway. However, I do realize that extraordinary circumstances may arise that are beyond your control, so talk with me before they interfere with your progress in the course.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities:
If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform me and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement:
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.
If you have questions about whether your use of other sources (such as books, websites, friends, writing center tutors) is fair or not, please ask me before turning in the work that you have a question about.

**Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence:**

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**Mandatory Course Evaluations:**

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available at the end of April through the last course day for spring semester courses.

**Last Day to Drop:**

The last day to drop the course without it affecting your transcript grades is April 13. I will not drop students, so it is your responsibility to do so if you choose.