

Academic Writing for English Language Learners

Instructor: Miriam Margala

Office: 541 O'Leary Library (South)

Office hours: Mo: 11:15am – 12:45pm

Th: 12:30 – 2:00 pm

NOTE: (office hours held in Ball 221)

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This course is designed to enable graduate level English language learners to become competent academic writers who can critically and creatively evaluate, analyze, construct and present their ideas and arguments. This is a student oriented, pro-active course where writing skills are connected to reading skills. Students will learn effective planning, drafting, rewriting and editing strategies to assist them with course work and thesis writing.

Grading: The course is taken on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis

Textbook: Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students by Stephen Bailey, 3rd edition, Routledge, ISBN: 978-0-415-59581-0

Topics/Issues to be covered in the class:

Academic Text Types

- Text structure (the introduction, the body, the conclusion)
- Getting started: the topic sentence, the thesis statement (forming a thesis)
- General-to-specific writing
- Specific-to-general writing

Writing Stages

- Organizing
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Reading (critical, analytical, constructive)
- Sentences -> paragraphs

Rhetorical Features of Text

- Coherence
- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Emphasis

Features of Academic Writing

- Direct
- Assertive
- Coherent
- Cohesive
- Clear
- Effective
- Focused
- Convincing (evidence and examples to support your thesis)

Various Types of Academic Texts

- Research papers
- Proposals
- Comparisons/contrasts
- Expositions
- Essays
- Arguments (deductive, inductive)
- Process texts

Hedging in Academic Text in English

- The issue of overstatements, generalizations
- The role and importance of hedges in academic text
- Various types of hedges

Other writing tasks:

- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Abstract writing

Language & Grammar Issues

- Sentences/phrases, simple, compound, complex
- Sentence length
- Parallelism
- Text construction
- Nouns, pronouns, verbs – meanings, text functions
- Subject-verb agreement
- Verb tenses
- Voice – passive, active
- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Problems: run-ons, sentence fragments, dangling & misplaced modifiers
- Punctuation, mechanics
- Synonyms
- Transitional words
- Many more

These topics are not set in stone – according to students’ needs, we will cover additional topics as needed.

Published essays, research papers, abstracts etc will be used to exemplify any issue or topic. Students are welcome to use papers/articles from their own fields – please feel free to email me any article/paper you’d like to be analyzed in class (I will need about a week to include it in our course work).

There will be plenty of hand-outs with various practical word-lists (to-be-avoided lists, most-used lists, lists of synonyms to expand your repertoire, and other helpful info).

The best way to contact me is via email.

No tests in this class. There will be weekly or bi-weekly mini assignments. You can use the textbook where you will find many exercises OR feel free to use a portion of your own scholarly article/research paper as long as it exemplifies some of the issues covered in class. In other

words – use as much of your own writing (your own research papers/articles from your field) as you can in this course.

Academic and Attendance Expectations:

There are only two grades: *satisfied/unsatisfied (Pass/Fail)*. In order to pass this course, the following is essential:

- **Your attendance**
- **Completing all assignments, exercises etc.**

If you miss more than **3 (three)** classes, it will become very difficult (if at all possible) to keep up with our classroom work, lectures and your overall learning and progress. This may lead to a failing grade. Always communicate with me if you have to miss a class. You will need to hand in any missed assignments ASAP. If you need any help, again, do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have any serious reason to miss more than three classes, talk to me and I will be happy to find a way to accommodate and help you.

Always check your emails – it is the most efficient way for us to communicate.

Academic Writing, Spring 2012

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND GUIDELINES:

- this course is designed to help you improve your writing skills - we (the Graduate School of Education and/or the instructor) do **NOT provide proofreading/editing services**. However, I DO encourage you to use your own content writing (use your field/specialty) for abstracts, paragraphs and any other writing assignments so that this course is relevant to you. We do not proofread your COMPLETE papers and/or other writing for publication.

- **ATTENDANCE:** please note that if you need to **miss MORE than 3 (three) classes, talk to me** - to miss more than 3 classes means that you are missing a lot of material which will prevent you from further improving and learning - always talk to me, I will gladly find a way for you to catch up to continue smoothly with our course work/material

- **GRADING POLICY:** there are **no grades in this course** (only PASS/NOT PASS) - you will PASS if you
1) follow the official attendance policy
2) hand in **ALL** the assignments **ON TIME** - for every **three late assignments, there will be one more assignment** to hand in **UNLESS YOU TALK TO ME** when you know you will be late with your assignment

(I do not grade your assignments/homeworks; I check your assignments and give you a detailed feedback so that you can improve your writing skills - if you cannot finish an assignment on time, again, ALWAYS talk to me so that we can work out an extended deadline)

- there are weekly assignments, these can be writing tasks, reading tasks or evaluating/constructive reading tasks (this task means you will be asked to read a text and then evaluate it in writing) -> this, however, is not set in stone - depending on your needs, we may have more than one assignment per week OR fewer

THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT ME - EMAIL: miriam_margala@uml.edu