

COM 101: University Writing

Course Information

Tuesday and Thursday, 11:25am-12:40pm

SB 213

Instructor: Andrew Roback

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Office: SH 231

Office Hours: Thursday 3:15-5:15pm (except university holidays and finals week)

Welcome

Welcome to COM 101: University Writing. This course will help you prepare to meet the writing requirements of courses that you take at IIT, and will help you develop your written communication skills for later use in your profession.

Course objectives

- Learn and be able to write effectively in the genres used in academic writing;
- Understand the writing process, and learn to take critique and make revisions.
- Learn to identify rhetorical contexts and develop the ability to apply rhetorical strategies to written work.
- Become proficient in finding, evaluating, and analyzing scholarly work. Learn methods of incorporating scholarly work into your argument (using a style guide for formatting).
- Learn to thoroughly edit papers for mistakes by learning about and practicing the mechanics associated with well structured English prose.

Required Texts

- Bullock, R. (2019). [*The Norton Field Guide to Writing*](#). 5th ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Bullock, R., Brody, M., & Weinberg, F. (2019). [*The Little Seagull Handbook with Exercises*](#). 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- All other texts will be provided or linked to on the course website (Blackboard).

Required Technology / Materials

- If you do not have an account already, you must create a Dropbox account. The student version is free and has enough storage for our purposes.
- You'll need access to a printer or money on your printing account for bringing paper drafts to class.
- A composition book that you bring with you to class for writing assignments.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments are due on the day listed on the course schedule. You are responsible for managing your time and ensuring that you have the capacity (internet access, correct software, etc.) to submit assignment by that deadline. Poor planning is not grounds for an extension.

Major writing assignments (60%)

These assignments will make up the majority of the work in the course. Each assignment will have a longer description and list of requirements. For each assignment, you will submit a draft and receive either feedback from me, peer reviews from your classmates, or both. Some assignments will have components that are due at intervals throughout the semester to keep you on track. I'll put all the details in the assignment folder on Blackboard.

- Resume/cover letter (10%)
 - Write a resume that expresses your education, employment history, and skills.
 - Write a cover letter in response to a job posting that expresses your qualifications for the position.
- Persuasive essay (10%)
 - Take a position on an issue and try to convince the reader to adopt your position using rhetorical strategies.
- Critical text analysis (10%)
 - Read a critical text and argue for or against the researcher's conclusions.
- Research paper (20%)
 - Choose a topic, take a position, then research and use outside sources to demonstrate support your perspective.
- Response paper (10%)
 - Read/watch a piece and make a claim about it, then argue your claim using evidence from the text.

Writing journal (20%)

Writing is a skill that's best developed by constant practice. You'll bring a composition book with you to class, and I'll ask you to perform writing exercises during class. Additionally, I'll assign writing practice exercises to be completed outside of class. In-class writing exercises cannot be made up. I'll post a list of writing exercises to do outside of class on Blackboard.

You'll submit this notebook for evaluation during the semester. I'll notify you one class in advance of when I'll be picking them up. If you're not caught up on the day that I collect them, you won't receive credit for the exercises.

I'll evaluate writing journal exercises with a plus sign (+) for excellent work, a check mark (✓) for work that was adequately completed, and a null sign (∅) for work that was poorly done or not completed.

Please label each entry with the date (either the date in class or the due date) and the number of each exercise. Try to keep your pages organized in order so that I don't miss any of your work.

Lastly, do not lose your book. Put your name and contact info on the book in case you misplace it. If you need to turn in your book to me outside of class for whatever reason, leave it only in my mailbox in the Humanities Department office (SH 218). Don't leave it for me in a classroom or try to slide it under my office door.

Participation and peer review (20%)

You should come to class ready to discuss the readings and participate in activities. Writers don't work in isolation, so you should be prepared to share work and give constructive criticism on other writers' work. When you are assigned to peer review, I expect to see thoughtful and thorough comments on your classmates' work. Consistently failing to participate in peer review or providing surface-level, unhelpful critiques will result in a lower grade.

Working on outside work during class is not allowed. Please also keep phone use, email checking, and chatting to the absolute minimum.

Please note that if you sit silently the entire semester and never participate in discussion, your grade for this component will suffer significantly. Points go to people who actively participate in class discussion and activities.

Grading Scale

All grades on assignments are weighted to their corresponding values on the syllabus. To calculate your grade, take the percentage grade I give you on an assignment, multiply by the value on the syllabus, and add the resulting figures. That is your final grade in the course.

Grade	Percent
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
E	<60

Attendance policy

You can miss up to three class meetings without penalty. After that, I'll reduce your final course grade by ten percent for each additional absence. If you miss more than six class meetings, your final grade in the course will be an "E" (provided they are not excusable absences such as illness, family emergency, etc.). If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, it counts as an absence.

Family and health emergencies happen and are excused absences; however, you must notify me as soon as reasonably possible if such a situation arises. If you stop attending class without a notification, I will assume you are not coming back and issue a grade of "E" for the semester. If you receive an email from me regarding absences and you do not reply, I will make the same assumption.

Finally, having a lot of work in your other classes is not an excuse for missing this class, nor are extracurricular activities unrelated to official university events or professional development (e.g. academic conferences, athletic events, etc.). Seek permission for excused absences from me in advance whenever possible.

FAQ and tips for a successful semester

- If I give you an extension due to extenuating circumstances and you fail to meet the agreed upon deadline, you will receive a zero on that assignment.
- Other professors may have let you submit all your work late at the end of the semester, but I won't. If you miss the deadlines and I put a zero in the gradebook on Blackboard, that grade is final.
- There is no extra credit in this course.
- Take notes. They will help you remember the main points of our discussion and help you to use tools outside of class.
- Make friends with a classmate so you can borrow notes if you are absent.
- Please refer to the syllabus/course schedule/assignment guide before emailing me with questions. Questions about submission method, dates, or requirements that can be answered by the above documents will result in a friendly reminder to reread the documents.
- If you are having trouble with the coursework or understanding the material, come talk to me. I have office hours, and I have no problem staying after class (unless I have a meeting). If you have a conflict and can't make it to office hours, send me an email to set up an appointment to meet online.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

You are expected to adhere to all IIT rules regarding academic honesty and conduct. Please familiarize yourself with the [Student Handbook policies](#). Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas without appropriate attribution of those ideas to the original author. Reordering words or sentences but conveying the same ideas as another author and representing those ideas as your own still constitutes plagiarism. The same goes for computer code, graphs, and illustrations: unless you wrote/made it, proper citations are required. I expect you to write everything you submit for this class. Unless I tell you to work in teams, your work should be solely your own.

If I detect any plagiarized content in your work, you will automatically fail the assignment and, depending on the severity of the infraction, the course. Additional penalties may be imposed by the University, such as academic sanctions and/or expulsion. If you are concerned that your work might constitute a breach of academic integrity, contact me via email before turning in your assignment and I will advise you. I will report plagiarism to the appropriate university authorities without exception and issue failing grades as necessary to prevent academic dishonesty.

The Writing Center (SH 232-233)

The Writing Center is a tutoring service that helps students develop writing skills critical to success in academic and professional pursuits. I strongly encourage any student to visit the Writing Center if you are having difficulty with any part of the writing process or if you simply want some feedback on your writing from another writer. Since you will be writing a great deal in this class (and, presumably, your entire life), it is to your benefit to take advantage of this free service to help you become a better writer.

Special Needs

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. In order to receive accommodations, students must obtain a letter of accommodation from the Center for Disability Resources and contact me in the first week of the course. The Center for Disability Resources (CDR) is located in Life Sciences Room 218, telephone 312-567-5744 or disabilities@iit.edu.