

# Academic Writing for Adults

## Course Syllabus

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### Course Description

*"A writer is a person for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people."*

-- Thomas Mann

Writing is so hard because it requires the clear communication of well thought out ideas. Spelling and grammar are the easy part. This class will help you master the hard as well as the easy parts of writing.

The skills you learn in this class are widely applicable and will help you improve your business and other writing. However, we will focus particular attention on writing to excel in SNL's writing-intensive curriculum. In this course, we will review and practice the essentials of good writing and improve your control over the mechanics and process of writing. Particular emphasis will be given to the process of revision as you learn to refine and develop your writing. You will receive individual feedback and guidance from the instructor, and you will learn to edit your own writing and give feedback to others. As a result, you will leave the class a more confident, effective and efficient writer. The class assumes a basic understanding of English grammar and carries four tuition credit hours.

### Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Use writing for college-level learning, thinking and communicating
2. Understand that there are many different types of writing and is able to adjust to conventions of a variety of genres, audiences and purposes with a particular focus on the conventions of academic writing, including formatting, standards of evidence, appropriate tone and style, and use of sources.
3. Write to explain, summarize, synthesize, reflect, argue, persuade, analyze, link experience and concepts, and demonstrate competence.
4. Have control over grammar, syntax, and punctuation and can manipulate them to suit a particular rhetorical situation.
5. Understand writing as an iterative process and can apply a repertoire of strategies for generating, organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and proof-reading papers that

- includes assessing and revising one's own writing as well as eliciting and using feedback from others.
6. Have a plan for continuous, ongoing improvement of writing that includes strategies for addressing problems, leveraging strengths, and mastering the writing genres related to one's focus area.

## Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type DePaul for name of the school.

[Click here for help buying your books](#)

### Required:

1. Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*, Sixth Edition with 2009 MLA Updated, from Bedford/St. Martin's, ISBN number 0-312-59332-5

Supplementing this textbook is an extensive website, *Diana Hacker's A Writer's Reference* (<http://www.dianahacker.com/writersref>). This website includes links to various sources and exercises. Students can tailor their work to address individual needs in grammar, composition, and documentation. Take a few minutes to look around the site and see what is available. If you decide or your instructor requires you to do some of the exercises available on this site, be sure to register and provide your instructor's e-mail address. Upon completing any exercises, e-mail your instructor as he or she will not necessarily get a notification when you complete your work.

2. Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* from WW Norton, ISBN number 978-0-393-92409-1
3. Assigned selections from *Writing Guide for SNL Students* at <http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html>
4. Additional readings available on e-reserve from the DePaul library, see <http://eres.lib.depaul.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=search>

### Recommended:

1. If English is not your native language and you struggle with English as a Second Language (ESL) issues like article and pronoun usage, you may want to also purchase for your own use the ESL Supplement for A Writer's Reference, ISBN# 0312-45233-0, cost \$7.50
2. A college dictionary
3. If you would like to read more about the craft of writing, the following are both readable and full of useful tips:

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1896.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Pocket Books, 2000.

## Course Competence

In this course, you will develop the following competence:

Competence	Competence Statement and Facets
L4	<p><b>Can use writing for college-level learning, thinking and communicating.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Understands there are many different types of writing and is able to adjust to conventions of a variety of genres, audiences and purposes with a particular focus on the conventions of academic writing, including formatting, standards of evidence, appropriate tone and style, and use of sources.</li><li>2. Can write to explain, summarize, synthesize, reflect, argue, persuade, analyze, link experience and concepts, and demonstrate competence.</li><li>3. Has control over grammar, syntax, and punctuation and can manipulate them to suit a particular rhetorical situation.</li><li>4. Understands writing as an iterative process and can apply a repertoire of strategies for generating, organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and proof-reading papers that includes assessing and revising one's own writing as well as eliciting and using feedback from others.</li><li>5. Has a plan for continuous, ongoing improvement of writing that includes strategies for addressing problems, leveraging strengths, and mastering the writing genres related to one's focus area.</li></ol> <p>Students demonstrate this competence through the Proficiency Exam or specific SNL courses. Students will continue to develop their writing skills throughout the program. SNL will not accept transfer courses for this competence.</p>

### How the Competence will be Demonstrated in this Course

Students will demonstrate the competence through drafting and revising papers, discussion board postings, peer revision, a final portfolio with a writing learning plan and supplemental exercises as necessary.

## Course Structure

This course consists of ten modules. The estimated time to complete each module is one week. Please note that this is a four-credit class offered over ten weeks. You should expect to spend 10 to 15 hours a week on this class.

**To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.**

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## Assessment

### Course Grading Scale

Academic Writing for Adults is designed as a Pass/Fail course. Students may elect to take the class for a letter grade according to the scale below.

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

### SNL Grading Policy for Lifelong Learning Courses

In certain SNL courses in the Lifelong Learning Area of the BA curriculum, instructors regularly use the pass/fail grading system. However, SNL also offers students the opportunity in several of these courses to select a "Grading" option where grades A through C- represent passing performance. The faculty member and the individual student together decide which system will best promote the student's learning in that particular course. With no exceptions, a student must obtain permission from the instructor to use the grade option by the beginning of the third week of the quarter. After the third week of the quarter the assessment style agreed upon, whether pass/fail or grading, cannot be changed. The instructor is required to provide the student the specific assessment criteria by which a grade will be determined prior to the student officially selecting this option. Grading criteria shall appear in the syllabus along with pass/fail assessment criteria.

Lifelong learning courses that already employ a grading system such as *Quantitative Reasoning* and *Collaborative Learning* will continue to use this system. The Lifelong learning courses *Learning Assessment Seminar*, *Foundations*, and *Summit Seminar* will continue to employ the pass/fail system exclusively. This policy applies to the other lifelong learning competencies and courses including, *Academic Writing for Adults*,

*Critical Thinking* , *Research Seminar* , and *Externship* . The pass/fail policy and procedure of the university found in the student handbook should be followed where a student wishes to seek this option for a graded course.

### Percentage distribution of Assessments

Two final drafts	40% each
Discussion board, first and second drafts, assignments and peer revisions	10%
Portfolio and writing learning plan	10%

**A note on the assignments and discussion board:** Because this class aims to give you practice drafting a variety of different papers, you **must** do each assigned draft in order to get credit for the final draft. Because the discussion board is where you participate in the class, active participation is also required for you to pass this class.

### Grading Policies, Practices and Assessment Criteria

This is a Pass/Fail course. In order to successfully complete this experience, students must:

1. participate meaningfully on the discussion board and in peer revision;
2. submit class assignments in a timely manner;
3. meet the criteria for the L4 competence as listed above.

While early drafts are opportunities to grope around and experiment and will not be as polished or well developed as final drafts, they should represent your best effort to write the paper and should not be stream of consciousness, a collection of notes or a half done essay. Every draft should be spell checked before you turn it in. Final drafts will be evaluated using the Grading Rubric for Papers at the School for New Learning (<http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/Rubric.html>).

At the end of the quarter, you will submit a Writing Learning Plan and a Portfolio. The Learning Plan addresses the fifth competence criteria and must include specific strategies for addressing your most common writing problems, equally concrete ideas for how to make the most of your strengths as a writer and a clear plan for mastering the writing genres related to your focus area. While the Learning Plan looks forward to set an agenda for your ongoing development as a writer, the portfolio demonstrates what you have learned and reflects upon what you have accomplished in this class. The Portfolio should demonstrate that you have met or exceeded the criteria for the L4 competence.

### Online Discussion

#### Discussion Boards

Discussion Boards are a forum for discussion and sharing information among students. Your instructor may create one or more discussion boards related to the topics you are studying each week.

At the beginning of the quarter, your instructor will set up three discussion boards.

These three discussions will help you and your classmates get off to an immediate start on the course, by providing conversational spaces for necessary, ongoing social and administrative activities. These discussions are:

- Introductions
- Course Q&A
- Chat -- a social meeting space for discussion that is not directly related to course content.

The Q&A discussion is where the management and administrative tasks of the course are conducted, and where you can ask 'process' questions and receive answers. You will also find the schedule of specific dates for your course in this discussion.

The Chat discussion can be used freely for your own conversation (like setting up groups or teams, if these are used in the course).

Your instructor will add additional discussion boards as you move through the modules.

### **Assessment Criteria & Guidelines for Online Discussion Participation**

The discussion boards will be used for sharing ideas and drafts; learning about and trying out new writing strategies; reviewing grammar, sentence structure and composition rules; and giving and receiving peer feedback. Much of your learning in this class will happen as a result of your participation in the discussion boards. Failure to participate actively in the discussion boards is akin to absence from a face-to-face class and can be grounds for failure of the course.

A good discussion board post is like a short essay. It has a point that is supported with well-developed evidence. It is clearly organized and cites references to other sources. A comment upon someone else's post should not just be a simple agreement or disagreement. Your comment should say what specifically you agree or disagree with and why. You should give your own evidence for why you are in agreement, not just repeat what the previous poster has already said.

As with every writing task, remember your audience and purpose when crafting your discussion board posts. The tone and content should be appropriate to context of a learning community. Here is a summary of advice from SNL instructors on crafting successful discussion board posts:

The best posts are specific, responsive to other posters, polite, analytical, and supported by evidence from classroom discussions and/or the texts in question. The weaker posts are too general, unoriginal, rude, simplistic, off-topic, and supported with emotion rather than fact. Instructors focused on the need for reflection--as opposed to simple agreement/disagreement with previous posters--and the need for interactivity. They suggested composing posts offline to avoid emotional outbursts or poorly thought-out posts, but they also emphasized that students must read their fellow posters' comments carefully and make sure to gear their responses to the topic.

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## **Policies**

### **Academic Integrity**

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for

oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

#### **A Special Note on Plagiarism for Academic Writing students:**

In college, knowing why, when and how to cite sources is vital. By using sources appropriately, you participate in the scholarly community as you relate your ideas and experiences to those of others. When citations are lacking or incorrect, you weaken your paper by failing to clearly make those connections. You also leave yourself open to charges of plagiarism which can have serious academic consequences.

Part of the work of this class is to make sure that you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, so be sure to ask if you have any questions about it. We will discuss how to cite sources and avoid plagiarism in the course. However, you can get a head start by looking at the sites indicated under "Help with Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism" (<http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/Writing%20Help.html#helpsources>).

#### **Disability Accommodations**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

## Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

## Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions" —interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
  - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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## Course Expectations

### Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are **not** self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least **FOUR** times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" Academic Writing course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least eight hours of homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

***The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.***

Don't Panic, Do Ask for Help: This class is cumulative, with assignments building upon each other. If you find yourself confused, stuck or falling behind, let your instructor know right away so you can address the problem before it becomes unmanageable. Students who fall behind can catch up, but they never do so by disappearing. Remember that a big part of the point of this class is to help you learn how to manage your writing, so do not hesitate to ask for help when you need it.

### Your Instructor's Role

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion instructor and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

### Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

You will learn with and from your classmates in the online discussions and group

assignments, sharing information and resources and posting your ideas and critiquing and expanding on the ideas of others in a collegial fashion. You are encouraged to bring your questions to the online discussions and respond to each other—do not always wait for the instructor to answer questions.

***If events arise in your life that will prevent your attendance in class for one week or more, it is your responsibility to make sure that your instructor is advised at the first possible opportunity. You, or a friend or family member can do that by email, postal mail or phone. Someone could also send a note to snlonline@depaul.edu, or call either of the SNL Online contact numbers listed on page 1 of this guide. This will allow your instructor to assist you to make up missing work. If these events occur early in the quarter and you wait until the end of the quarter before informing your instructor, do not expect to receive an Incomplete.***

### **Credits**

This course was designed and produced by Michelle Navarre Cleary and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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