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WRIT 101.01C: College Writing I - Composition

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Writ 101: Composition I

Spring 2016

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"A learned person will become noble only when he or she has put into real practice what has been learned, instead of just mere words." ---Dalai Lama

"The question is not what you look at, but what you see." --Henry David Thoreau, journal entry for August 5, 1851

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

WRIT 101 is a course in public writing, a kind of writing that is meant to communicate with and engage a specific audience toward a specific purpose, and it is based on community. Your purpose will ultimately be to write a proposal that could have positive impacts on an important issue within your local community. To do so, we will work on four writing projects throughout the course, culminating in a proposal that would ideally be sent to the decision maker(s) and argue for the specific change requested.

We begin with a *community profile*, an assignment that asks you to vividly describe a specific community. This assignment offers you the opportunity to look more deeply at a community, whether that community is your current hometown, a community where you intend to live, or a different kind of community, such as a club, a religious organization, an online group, a civic group, an artistic group, or a learning community that you are currently involved with or intend to be. The only requirements in terms of the selection of the community are that it is of significant personal interest and that you can provide an insider's perspective on it. Ideally, the community you select for the first assignment will be the one you will work with throughout the course.

We continue with an *exploratory essay*, an assignment that asks you to resist any immediate conclusion about your community and to truly explore difficult questions and possible answers. The assignment includes research of both local and national sources and leads to the selection of a community issue. It then leads to additional questions about that issue, and, finally, to possible answers to the questions from multiple points of view. It is truly an exploration without any expectation of determining a thesis or supporting the thesis. Instead, it narrates the process of exploratory research and assessment of sources.

From there, you will create a *causal argument presentation*. This argument looks specifically at two or three causes of the issue/problem as it occurs locally, determines the primary cause, and argues for it. You can base some of this argument on the research completed for the exploratory essay, but new research should be conducted that looks directly at the primary cause of the problem. The research serves as support for your own argument, observations, and analysis.

Finally, you will compose, refine, and polish a *proposal* that asks its audience to implement a specific change in order to improve the community in a positive way. Your proposal will outline specific actions necessary, argue for their importance based on observation and evidence, support evidence for their feasibility, and anticipate alternative solutions and objections. Ideally, the proposal would be submitted to an actual committee or individual authority within the community.

At some point in the semester, you will be required to revise one of the essays for which you received a grade and comments. The revision must be a substantive one, in which you address your instructor's comments and questions and make any improvements necessary to finally produce a better essay.

COURSE TEXT:

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, 10th ed., Bedford e-book, Axelrod and Cooper.

Required Technology: Campus E-mail Accounts and Moodle:

Please activate your campus e-mail account right away. Every student is issued a university e-mail account, and there is no cost. Go to any technology help desk on campus for assistance on either campus. *You will need to activate your email before you can access Moodle.*

This course requires essential computer skills so that you can access email and negotiate Moodle. *Early in the semester, UM offers a number of Moodle workshops. If you are unfamiliar with Moodle or if you have limited computer experience, please attend these workshops.* You will be expected to work with computers for appropriate class assignments, and most correspondences will be conducted via email/Moodle. Most class materials and instructions will be posted in Moodle. *With the exception of some initial explanations during our first classes, please do not expect extra time in class for any learning curve you might face with technology.* Likewise, please do not expect any extensions on due dates for an assignment because of any technical difficulties you have not conquered. Backup all work.

Course Requirements and Policies

Writing

You will have the opportunity to develop all of your major projects through a process of inquiry and drafting. You will compose papers in and out of class, alone and with your small group. For some of your writings, I'll ask you to bring enough draft copies to share with your group or ask you to email your papers to group members for workshop. We will include whole-class workshops into the drafting process. *All inquiry projects must be completed for you to pass the course.* I will respond to these projects with written comments focused on suggestions for revision, but I will also mark them using a check system to help you know where you stand on a specific project.

Procedural basics for written work

1. Complete all reading and writing assignments on time. Be sure that all written assignments (except for in-class work) are word-processed.
2. Use the following format for submitting written assignments unless instructed otherwise or unless you're following specific genre conventions:
 - Provide a basic header in the upper left hand corner of page 1:
 - Your name
 - Course section and number
 - Instructor's Name
 - Date
 - Double-space the text
 - Use one-inch margins
 - Use a standard 12-point font & Times New Roman
 - Number all pages in the upper right hand corner starting with page 2
 - Use a works cited page as needed
3. Keep copies of all your work, as hard copy and on CD, disk, or memory card
4. Save everything in your working portfolio.

GRADING SUMMARY:

Community Profile:	20%
Exploratory Essay & Annot. Bib:	25%
Causal Argument Presentation:	15%
Final Proposal:	20%
Revision	10%

OTHER COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**Participation and Preparedness:**

Throughout the course, you will be asked to complete assignments that serve as building blocks to the course assignments, either in clarifying the theories that guide our writing processes or in working through stages of the essays themselves. These assignments are designed to produce your best results, both in course performance and in overall learning. The more assignments you neglect, the poorer your performance will be. Make use of this experience by completing all assigned homework and drafts and by participating in class and with your peers. This class is based on the discussion and production of writing about community issues. That writing makes use of an individual's knowledge and research to argue for a new understanding or a better way of operating that benefits the entire community. You have not had the same experiences I have, and vice versa. I am relying on your contributions to class discussions and to the work of your classmates. Treat this component of your course as another rhetorical situation. I am the grading audience, but your peers are an audience as well. We will be watching for intelligent and appropriate contributions to the class discussions, for engagement with the topics and the lessons, for preparedness for class, and for quality effort on your projects.

Attendance:

Attendance to this class is mandatory. You cannot learn if you are not exposed to the ideas and the work of the course. Be in class, be on time, and be prepared for the work of the day. If you do so, you will do well in the course.

T/R classes

More than two absences from a T/R class will compromise your grade. Five or more absences from a T/R class will result in a failing grade.

3rd absence: final grade drops one letter grade

4th absence: final grade drops one letter grade

5th absence: final grade is an F

Late Work. If you miss a draft deadline, you've missed a crucial chance for feedback on your work. If you aren't ready with a response to a group member's draft, you're letting down someone who is counting on you for help. If you aren't prepared for class, you limit your own voice and contributions to the class and community of writers and readers. For all these reasons, *late work is unacceptable*. If you ever have a problem with an assignment, talk to me in advance of the deadline and you may be able to negotiate a special arrangement. Deadlines are not negotiable after you've missed them.

Disability Services:

The University of Montana is committed to providing equal access to programs for students with disabilities. [Disability Services](#) promotes an accessible learning environment and provides services to students with disabilities. The office also advocates responsibility for an accessible and hospitable learning environment through the removal of informational, physical, and attitudinal barriers. For more information, call (406) 243-2243.

Academic Support Services:

We believe that all students can succeed if they put their minds to it. The [Academic Support Center](#) offers a variety of services to help students reach this goal. ASC staff tutor in many subject areas,

provide academic counseling, and assist students in the transition to college. The best news is that all of these services are free and available to all students. For more information, please call 406.243.7826.

- Tutoring
- Retention Support
- COMPASS Testing (free of charge)

The Mansfield Library and the Writing Center are also both excellent resources for researchers and writers. You may be asked to participate in a session on library research and take a draft of a paper to the Writing Center for feedback. Experienced writers do not hesitate to seek out second readers of a draft, and the WC is a great resource.

Academic Integrity:

The most clear and concise definition of plagiarism I have found comes from Neil Baird, a former colleague. I quote it at length below:

“Plagiarism is defined as representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or work as one’s own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the exact duplication of another’s work and the incorporation of a substantial or essential portion thereof. Other examples of plagiarism include the acts of appropriating the artistic or musical composition of another and Internet documents, or portions thereof, presenting them as your own.

The key to avoiding plagiarism is to give proper credit whenever the following are used:

- Another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories
- Facts, statistics, graphs or other drawings or any pieces of information that are not common knowledge
- Quotations of another’s actual spoken or written words
- Paraphrases of another’s spoken or written words
- Organization patterns or structures of another’s spoken or written work

Worth noting is the fact that ignorance does not excuse plagiarism. Intentional plagiarism consists of knowingly copying or using another’s work without giving proper credit. Unintentional plagiarism, on the other hand, may result from a lack of familiarity with citation standards, poor research methods, or careless “cutting and pasting” of Internet and other electronic sources. In either case, both intentional and unintentional plagiarism constitute violations of the policy on Academic Dishonesty. Please see me if you have *any* questions or concerns, for plagiarism results in a failing grade on a particular paper to failure of the course.” (Baird, Course Syllabus)

Student Decorum:

Missoula College is designed as a space to share ideas and learn from one another. It is not a space for disrespectful behavior including antagonistic or bigoted language, consistent late arrivals to class, or disruptive behavior in class, including the use of cell phones. We will discuss issues that may result in disagreement and dialogue, but that dialogue should be conducted in a professional and respectful manner, one that respects the dignity of all participants.