

Fall 9-2004

## COM 101.03: College Writing

Mark Medvetz

*University of Montana - Missoula*, [mark.medvetz@umontana.edu](mailto:mark.medvetz@umontana.edu)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

---

### Recommended Citation

Medvetz, Mark, "COM 101.03: College Writing" (2004). *Syllabi*. 4338.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/4338>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

UM - Missoula - College of Technology  
COM 101 sections 01, 02, & 03  
Autumn 2004  
Office Hours: TBA and by appointment

Mark Medvetz  
Office: HB  
243-7904  
[mark.Medvetz@umontana.edu](mailto:mark.Medvetz@umontana.edu)

**Text:**

*The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Axelrod and Cooper  
*Little, Brown Compact Handbook*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Arron, Jane E.

*"Knowing why an issue matters to you can help you make it matter to others"* John Ramage, "Writing Arguments"

**Course Description**

In this first-year course students will improve and refine their reading, critical thinking, and writing skills by reading, analyzing, and writing expository and argumentative texts. Students will begin the semester investigating and analyzing annotation and summary as primary strategies for reading texts and for constructing their own writing. Next, students will construct expository (informative) and argumentative essays. By the end of the semester, students will utilize research in final argumentative papers.

**Objectives**

Analysis and Reading

To help students

- improve ability to comprehend and interact with difficult reading material
- summarize, agree with, and question arguments they read
- identify alternative viewpoints
- cope with ambiguity and disagreement between opposing views
- analyze visual arguments and their rhetorical effects

Writing

To help students

- build a repertoire of strategies for generating claims that they want to argue
- develop strategies for generating effective evidence for claims and reasons
- identify and analyze unstated assumptions (warrants)
- employ persuasive appeals: logos, ethos, pathos
- recognize the essential nature of audience in the rhetorical process
- construct claim-specific arguments: definitional, evaluation, and proposal
- find, evaluate, employ, and document sources for a researched argument
- understand the recursive nature of writing in relation to their own writing process

Argument

To help students understand that an argument

- begins with an issue question
- contains a claim with reasons
- is a process of clarification and inquiry
- grows from "truth-seeking" and awareness of writing as a social act

**Required Work**

*For grading purposes, I do not attach percentages to the following requirements and assignments. Preparation and participation are organic elements in my teaching model; therefore, no grade is assigned. However, a lack of preparation and participation always begets lower grades. Your end-of-semester grade must reflect the level of proficiency you have reached as a writer. To this end I will employ a basic portfolio model for assessment as well as grading rubrics similar to the models attached to this syllabus. With each assignment I will give a*



### Portfolios

All written work must be kept in a portfolio. We will discuss the procedure for this during the first weeks of the semester.

### Daily Reading Assignments and Informal Writing Assignments

With rare exceptions, there will be daily reading.

Informal writing: minimum of six, 1 or 2 pp. responses

### Small Group Work

There will be extensive use of small-group work environments.

### **Course Policies:**

1. Regular attendance is mandatory and factors into your final grade. Students are expected to arrive on time and to participate constructively in class discussion. It may be possible to perform well in some courses by simply reading the texts and taking tests, but that is not the case in writing courses. Although the reading assignments create a forum, you will come to understand the expectations for your writing through the lectures, discussions, writing activities, and peer responses that occur in class. Much of the course depends on collaborative work, so you must be present to contribute your insights as well as to receive feedback.

Attentive and active participation in class discussion and in group work are required as it is essential for accomplishing the course goals. You will be able to do this if you read the assigned material carefully and respond thoughtfully to that material. Keep current with the readings and writing assignments.

**[Please note:** Everyone suffers a certain amount of reticence when it comes to speaking to a group. Although this is a writing class, expressing your ideas as well as entertaining other points of view in a discussion forum never fails to create at least some fodder for your writing. Students are expected to take a strong interest in group discussions.]

2. Absences: you are allowed 2 (two) absences for any reason throughout the semester. Absences beyond the two will affect your final grade. You will not be able to pass the class if you accrue more than 4 (four) absences. The bottom line: plan to attend class everyday. Save your 2 allowable absences for true emergencies.
3. I will be available to meet with you during conferences and by appointment. You are invited to talk with me about your ideas, about comments you don't understand, about problems you're having with learning in this class. Feel free to email me. I will respond as soon as possible. If you want to discuss any specific grade, please wait 24 hours, giving yourself time to consider my assessment and your response. **Please bring all drafts (with or without grades and/or comments)** to any conference about papers/grades.
4. All writing should follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. An example of MLA format and links to websites for such formatting will be available in Blackboard.

**Please note:** this is a writing course and not a computer course; however, you will be expected to work with computers for class assignments, and correspondences will be conducted via email/Blackboard. 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 assignment because of any technical difficulties you have not conquered. Backup all work. Keep copies of all drafts of an assignment. Always keep an [electronic] copy of any work. Drafts and final papers are to be stapled in the left hand corner. Do not use a title page or any plastic folders.

5. **Writing workshops will be held on the same day first drafts are due.** You will need at least two copies for these workshops. If the number of students and days of instruction permit, we may do class workshops of specific student papers.

6. Please read the policy statement on plagiarism in the University Catalogue.  
<http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

In brief, plagiarism is any attempt to misrepresent another writer's work as your own. This includes scooping something off the Internet. It is expected that you will adhere to this policy. Plagiarism of any sort will result in a course grade of F and I will follow the disciplinary procedures as stated in the Student Conduct Code <http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/CODE.htm>

*Students may be asked for their research or sources at any time.*

7. COM 101 is only offered for traditional grades, A-F, and I will employ the 'plus & minus' option. No student taking COM 101 should expect to receive an incomplete.

8. Auditors of COM 101 must meet all requirements established for traditional-grade students.

9. Reminder: The dates for the last days to drop this class with and without a refund are posted on Cyberbear: <http://cyberbear.umt.edu/>

Students are responsible for all academic dates and deadlines for the Autumn 20034Semester.

### **Course Assignments and Evaluation:**

#### PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION IN DAILY ASSIGNMENTS:

The standards and criteria that will be used to grade participation and preparation are based on the following:

- One hundred percent attendance [If unable to attend a class session due to illness or an emergency, you must arrange with another student to get the notes and be able to summarize and analyze the content of the presentation.]
- Listening carefully, taking notes, participating effectively in group discussions, and asking appropriate questions
- Consideration of community: avoidance of undue claims of time or attention from others
- Awareness of and appropriate response to the learning dynamics required in class
- Participation in peer work and teacher conferences. Attendance is mandatory at peer response sessions.

#### DAILY ASSIGNMENTS:

Daily assignments or speculative writings in response to readings and class assignments (1 page or less) will be assigned regularly along with the major writing assignments. Although you may not receive individual grades on these assignments, they will count toward your final grade. You will receive full credit by doing each assignment completely and thoughtfully and by turning in your daily assignments on the day they are due.

#### FIRST DRAFTS, FINAL DRAFTS, AND FINAL EXAM

You will be expected to complete at least one first draft and one final draft of each major writing assignment (along with the daily assignments) per unit throughout the semester.

No late papers will be accepted for evaluation unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. The grade for any approved late can be subject to a penalty of going down a half grade point for every day it is late.

Revision Policy

Please refer to "Major Writing Assignments."

Final Exam

There is a final exam: <http://cyberbear.umt.edu/> Please make holiday plans accordingly.

Exit Assessment

In order to receive credit for COM 101, students must pass an exit assessment. Exit assessment prompts will be given on TBA in order for students to prepare for the actual exit assessment, which will take place on the last schedule class day. (T/R schedule: Please note: although we meet for 80 minutes twice a week, you will be restricted to the same amount of time given to sections following a MWF schedule.)

*Exit assessments are individual from course grades. Therefore, a student might pass the exit assessment and not earn a passing grade for the course*

**Grading Criteria for Major Writing Assignments**

Beginning with the 2004-2005 academic year, I will employ a plus/minus grading system. Valid grades and their point values per credit under the traditional grading system will be:

A	4.00	C+	2.33	D+	1.33	F	0.00
A-	3.67	C	2.00	D	1.00		
B+	3.33	C-	1.67	D-	0.67		
B	3.00						
B-	2.67						

*Please verify grade values for your own records.*

Because students will be asked to do both expository and argumentative papers, the standards and rubrics for grading will vary. One staple of consistency will apply: the three elements of the rhetorical situation--message, audience, and writer--represent criteria connected inextricably to any act of writing

Please Note: To complicate matters—and to indicate to students the complexity of assessment and grading— all students should be familiar with the “Evaluative Criteria Used in the Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment” The criteria may be viewed at the following web site:

<http://www.umt.edu/provost/writingassessment/criteria.htm>

Attached to the syllabus are several rubrics that should give students a firm indication of my grading process.

**Disability Services:** I am willing to provide accommodations for students with disabilities with the proper verification.

Grading Rubric  
Argumentation  
Medvetz

**An ‘A-level’ paper applies to outstanding student work. In concert with the criteria below, the paper presents a sustained critical engagement with the material. (This engagement can take such forms as shedding original light on the material, investigating patterns and connections, posing questions, and raising issues.)**

There is a clear and effective introduction that includes a clear explanation of the issue and needed background and the writer’s thesis explicitly stated.

The main body of the essay clearly and effectively presents and supports each reason with content that is specific, interesting, appropriate, and convincing.

Each reason is tied to a value or belief held by the audience

*Summary of views differing from the writer* is fair and complete.

Response to opposing views should refute or concede, illuminate weaknesses, and acknowledge strengths when appropriate.

Conclusion brings essay to an appropriate closure by summing up argument and, when appropriate either develops a final impression or a call to action.

There are logical transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing.

There are few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.

Paper demonstrates command of a mature, unpretentious diction.

**A ‘B-level’ paper marks work of high quality that reflects a command of material and a strong presentation, but lacks a sustained critical engagement with the material.**

There is an introduction and a clear thesis.

Although there may be minor weakness in the main body of the essay, it presents and supports each reason with content that is specific, interesting, appropriate, and convincing

Each reason is tied to a value or belief held by the audience

*Summary of views differing from the writer* is fair and complete.

Response to opposing views should refute or concede, illuminate weaknesses, and acknowledge strengths when appropriate.

Conclusion brings essay to an appropriate closure by summing up argument and, when appropriate either develops a final impression or a call to action.

There are logical transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing.

There are few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.

Paper is less distinguished in its use of language.

---

**A 'C-level' paper represents average work. Paper is of good overall quality but exhibits a lack of critical engagement as well as either deficiencies in the student's command of the material or problems with presentation.**

There is a thesis, but it may be too general or too unclear.

Although the main body of the essay, presents and supports each reason the content is not always specific or convincing.

Not all reasons are tied to a value or belief held by the audience

There is a *summary of views differing from the writer*.

There is a response to opposing views but does not completely refute or concede, illuminate weaknesses, and acknowledge strengths when appropriate.

There is a conclusion.

There are awkward transitions.

There are not varied sentence constructions, tending toward monotony.

There are mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems.

---

**A 'D' or 'F' paper is assigned to unsuccessful work. In general, there are significant problems with the student's work. There is little or no critical attention given to the material.**

Paper lacks a thesis.

Argument lacks development.

Support is general or irrelevant.

There are significant organizational problems.

Paper fails to fulfill the assignment.

Transitions are confusing or absent.

Paper contains ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences and/or paper demonstrates problems with spelling, diction, or syntax.

Grading Rubric  
Expository Writing  
Medvetz

**An ‘A’ paper applies to outstanding student work. In concert with the criteria below, the paper presents a sustained critical engagement with the material. (This engagement can take such forms as shedding original light on the material, investigating patterns and connections, posing questions, and raising issues.)**

There is a clear thesis.

Paper is well developed with content that is specific, interesting, appropriate, and convincing.

Paper is well organized.

There are logical transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing.

There are few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.

Paper demonstrates command of a mature, unpretentious diction.

**A ‘B’ paper marks work of high quality that reflects a command of material and a strong presentation, but lacks a sustained critical engagement with the material.**

There is a clear thesis.

There may be minor weaknesses in development.

There may be minor lapses in organization and transitions.

Paper may contain some sentence structures that are awkward or ineffective.

Paper may have minor mechanical, grammatical, or diction problems.

Paper is less distinguished in its use of language.

**A ‘C’ paper represents average work. Paper is of good overall quality but exhibits a lack of critical engagement as well as either deficiencies in the student’s command of the material or problems with presentation.**

There is a thesis, but it may be too general or too unclear.

Paper is developed, but the content is not always specific or convincing.

There are lapses in organization. There are awkward transitions.

There are not varied sentence constructions, tending toward monotony.

There are mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems.

**A ‘D’ or ‘F’ paper is assigned to unsuccessful work. In general, there are significant problems with the student’s work. There is little or no critical attention given to the material.**

Paper lacks a thesis.

Argument lacks development.

Support is general or irrelevant.

There are significant organizational problems.

Paper fails to fulfill the assignment.

Transitions are confusing or absent.

Paper contains ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences and/or paper demonstrates problems with spelling, diction, or syntax.