

111 Syllabus

There's one textbook for this class, and it isn't a traditional "English" book -- not a grammar or writing text. Instead, it's a book about how to think -- critically -- a very good skill to have, regardless of where you're headed in school or life. I hope it will prove an interesting topic to read and talk about (it has in the past), and studying how to think about things more clearly will form the basis of our conversations and writing assignments.

This means that all the writing instruction in the course will come from me, during class, rather than from a textbook. You need to be here for that information and take good notes so that you'll have the knowledge to write the kind of paper I'll be teaching you.

Attendance is vital here. After four absences, I reserve the right to drop you from the course. We're pretty light on homework compared to some other classes, so class time becomes doubly important. If you know you can't make a session, you should let me know ahead of time to try to cover the work you'll miss.

There are two kinds of writing assignments in the class: papers and credit assignments. Credit assignments are short thought-provoking pieces connected to our studies, sometimes done in class, sometimes as homework. They're not graded -- you receive credit if you do them, zero if you don't. My advice is to take them seriously and keep up with them. Shortchanging the credit assignments is one way to get into trouble in this class.

I'm currently planning on three short graded finished papers for this class, though that may change. I expect them to be carefully prepared and typed -- if that's a serious problem for you, let me know. Your performance on these papers is the most important single element in your grade for the course.

This isn't much of a "testing" class, since our emphasis is on skills rather than a body of knowledge. Still, there are three items in the course that look like tests, one on a learning strategy, one on thinking errors, and one at the end of the course to learn how to take an essay exam.

There are other ways you can help yourself in this class. I've already mentioned the importance of attendance, and I'd add to that the benefits of class participation. Especially in a class on critical thinking, I need to know that you are thinking, and the handiest way to do that is to speak up in class. Your opinions, answers, and questions are an important part of the process and make the class a much more enjoyable and educational experience. Participation helps us and can help you.

I use a holistic approach to grading, taking into account your total accomplishment as a writer and as a student. I try to give credit for different kinds of strengths, though your ability as a writer is primary. All the elements of the class are important, and my goal is to give students the highest grade I can justify. Therefore, I don't break down the pieces of the class mathematically -- 20% for this, 10% for that. If you're concerned about where you stand at any point in the course, come and see me.

How to get a hold of me

My office number is S-7, in the basement of the Fine Arts Building. My office phone is 6869169, and you should leave a message if you don't catch me in. In a pinch, you can sometimes reach me through my secretary at 686-9159. My Email address is jfaugust@alpha.delta.edu

There are two times you should definitely call. If you miss class, you should call soon to get the information you need for the next session. Also, if you're working on an assignment and you have questions about what it is you're supposed to be doing, call for clarification.