

# ENGL 102

## English Composition and Rhetoric

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### *General Description*

#### **Purpose and Nature of the Course**

Welcome to English 102. This course focuses on argumentative prose and is the second of two courses in freshman English offered by UNC-Chapel Hill through the Friday Center for Continuing Education. English 101 (or its equivalent) is a prerequisite for English 102. Occasionally, students who do not wish to earn credit toward a college degree may be allowed to register for English 102 without the prerequisite, provided they show themselves able to pursue the course successfully.

The major goal of this course is to teach students the major components of argument. Students will learn to read a variety of arguments closely and critically so as to evaluate and judge their effectiveness; they will also learn to write a persuasive argument with a clear purpose and appropriate support.

By the end of the course, then, you should be able to judge whether the arguments you read are effective and worth your approval or dismissal. You should also be able to produce well-reasoned arguments that are forceful and stand up to scrutiny. Part of this ability will depend on your appreciation for the varying contexts for writing, that is, the specific topic, purpose, and audience for each writing occasion. To achieve your goals when writing, you need to understand as much as possible about context: what other writers have said about the subject, who makes up your audience, what they already know about the subject, what kinds of evidence they will find convincing, what they expect your writing to “look like,” and so forth.

The ability to evaluate and produce effective arguments is a skill that will serve you well, especially in your public life. Ours is a democratic society in which everyone is encouraged

to voice opinions and help choose, after reading or listening to their views, those who govern us. And ours is a competitive economy in which success is frequently tied to a person's ability to influence others. Most importantly, however, a solid understanding of the elements of argument is our best means of preserving personal freedom and civil liberty. From Patrick Henry to Susan B. Anthony to Martin Luther King, Jr., our nation's great civic leaders have all been skilled arguers.

The general pattern of the course will be to cover a chapter of *Elements of Argument* and follow it with reading selections you will be asked to analyze in accordance with the principles learned in the previous lesson. This analysis may take the form of answering essay questions or writing a paper.

There are eight major paper assignments. Most will require you to respond to the readings; however, some will be essays in which you create your own argument. One of the analysis papers will be on Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, and one of the personal argument papers will require you to conduct some research.

## **Required Textbooks and Materials**

You will need the following texts and materials to complete this course successfully:

- Leonard J. Rosen and Laurence Behrens, *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook* (5th edition). You will use this manual as a guide to writing, editing, and correcting your papers. It will be especially useful when writing the research paper.
- Annette T. Rottenburg, *Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader* (7th edition). You will use this reader as a source for assigned readings and as a guide in learning to analyze arguments. This book includes a large section of essays representing opposing viewpoints, which may be used as a starting point and as source material for the research paper.
- *The Awakening and Selected Stories* by Kate Chopin, edited by Sandra M. Gilbert (Penguin Classics edition). Chopin's novel will be used in the lesson on fiction as argument.

- A recent edition of a good college dictionary. Consider either *Webster's College Dictionary* or *The American Heritage Dictionary*, but use any dictionary that offers clear definitions and examples of usage.
- Daily newspapers and the World Wide Web will also serve as sources for articles and editorials for you to analyze, support, or refute.

The texts may be purchased from the Higher Grounds bookstore, located in the Friday Center, using the book order form in this manual or you can purchase the book online at <https://s4.its.unc.edu/HigherGrounds>. Ordering from Higher Grounds will ensure that you receive the proper edition of each title.

### **How to Approach Lessons and Written Work**

There is approximately the same number of lessons in this course as there are weeks in a semester. With a few exceptions, each lesson covers about the same amount of material as might be covered in a week in the classroom. Since a student on campus is expected to spend about two hours in outside preparation for each hour spent in class, you should reasonably expect to spend six to eight hours preparing each lesson. Much more or much less than this may be a sign that you're having difficulty understanding the lessons.

Try to do some work on this course each day. If you work steadily, you are more likely to finish the course and to produce better results than if you work only sporadically and thus run the risk of forgetting ideas and principles covered in earlier lessons. If you let one week go by between lessons, it may be all too easy to let two weeks go by. Before you realize it, your registration may expire while you may be only halfway through. On the other hand, give yourself plenty of time to do a good job. A seventeen-week course requires approximately four months to complete. If you try to rush through it more quickly than that, you run the risk of not giving yourself enough opportunity to understand the lessons and develop as a writer.

It is not a good idea to try to complete a lesson in one day. If the lesson includes writing a paper, you will need to work through planning, prewriting, writing, revising, editing, correcting, and polishing. And it is best to return to your writing over successive days so that each time you work, you will be alert and fresh.

Do not attempt any writing assignment until you have read and mastered the material upon which it is based. First, do the assigned reading, taking care to make note of what you are asked to do with it, and then reread it before writing anything. In the type of close analytical reading you are asked to do in this course, you may need to read the material several times.

Keep your dictionary at hand as you work. It isn't possible to have a complete understanding of the works you read if you do not understand all the words in them. Also, use a pen or pencil. As you read, circle words you are not familiar with. Try to get an understanding of the words from their context. Then look them up in your dictionary. If you want to improve your vocabulary, make a list of these unfamiliar words and their definitions. Writing words down like this is one of the best ways to learn and remember them.

As you read, you should also use your pen or pencil to underline, star, or otherwise mark key passages, phrases, and ideas. Doing so will help keep you abreast of the outline and flow of an author's argument, and it will enable you to find quickly important sections of an essay later on. Write notes in the margins to record your questions, reactions, or other impressions. These will also serve as a useful guide once you begin thinking about an essay and writing your analysis of it.

A writing assignment is not finished until it has been proofread and necessary corrections have been made. Remember that when you mail in your assignments, you are asking someone else to read them. Offering clean, corrected copy is a mark of courtesy and professionalism.

In order to learn from your mistakes, review all of your work when it is returned and make note of your problem areas. If you consistently make mistakes in grammar, punctuation, or mechanics, your instructor will suggest pertinent sections of

the handbook for you to study so that you can learn how to eliminate those errors.

### **If You Have Questions**

If you have questions about an assignment or about comments received on a previous lesson, please ask. Your questions indicate curiosity, a willingness to learn, and a desire to improve. Unlike a traditional course, this course offers no provision for student conferences. However, you may ask questions and read comments on the cover sheet for each lesson, or you may attach a separate sheet to your work.

### **Guidelines for Submitting Assignments**

1. When possible, type and double-space all written work. Only use the front side of each page. Number each page.
2. Use one-inch margins and, if using a computer or word processor, a standard 12-point font, such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Courier.
3. Use standard size (8½ x 11) white typing paper, not pages torn from legal pads, spiral notebooks, and the like. Your work is handled by several people before it is returned to you, and it will help the process if paper size is standard.
4. For occasional handwritten work, use blue or black ink, write on every other line, and use only the front side of each page. Write with your best print or cursive script. Any deviations from these guidelines will make your work harder to read and evaluate effectively. Illegible handwriting will be returned for you to do over.
5. Although such occurrences are rare, papers do get lost in the mail. Make copies of your work to keep for yourself, but always submit the originals.
6. Proofread your work, and turn in only correct, clean, legible copy.
7. Remember to attach the matching cover sheet to each written assignment you submit. These sheets are located at the end of each lesson.

## **Final Examination**

The final exam will consist of three parts. There will be analytical questions on a reading selection that will be provided. There will be a personal argument essay in which you will take a stand on an issue offered for your consideration. There will be a single essay question on *The Awakening*. The grade on the final exam will count for at least one-fifth of your grade in the course, and *you must pass the exam in order to pass the course*. Further information can be found on the exam application at the end of this manual.

## **Evaluation and Grading**

Because this is a composition and rhetoric course, your ideas and how well you express them are the most important factor in the grades you earn. However, if you do not present clean, clear prose free of misspellings, incorrect punctuation, usage and diction problems, and the like, then your ideas are likely to become part of the background—unnoticed and unappreciated. Many readers do not take arguments seriously if they contain poor grammar and punctuation or misspellings. They are likely to say, “Why should I pay attention to this?” Half the effort in good writing is put into its presentation: Just as you would not attend a wedding in jeans and a T-shirt, do not present your audience with a poorly groomed paper.

Even perfect prose is no guarantee of a good grade, though. Error-free writing that is uninteresting and reveals no serious thought is at best average, as is any paper that does not develop its ideas, does not contain enough evidence, or is not otherwise persuasive.

One practical goal of this course is to help you improve your writing. As you improve, you should begin to see that improvement reflected in the grades you earn. However, understand that the grade on any assignment will be based on achievement, not effort, and that it reflects what you accomplished, not what you did wrong. Only you can tell how hard you worked or how many hours you spent preparing a lesson; anyone else only has the finished product. Roger Ebert, speaking of movies, said that “the level of their achievement is often more important than the level of their ambition.” The same is true of student papers as well.

## **Plagiarism**

The definition of plagiarism adhered to in this course is a narrow one:

- Wholesale copying from source material without using quotation marks is plagiarism.
- Taking distinctive words, phrases, or patterns of usage from a source without crediting the source is plagiarism.
- Allowing important terms or ideas to creep into paraphrase or summary that purports to be your own is plagiarism.
- Using your own words to discuss another's ideas without giving the other person credit is plagiarism.

Plagiarism is stealing, just as shoplifting is stealing.

Plagiarism defeats the purpose of this course. If you plagiarize you are not presenting your own ideas in your own words, and if you plagiarize, you will not learn to convey acceptably the ideas of others in your own words. Besides having a detrimental effect on your learning, plagiarism can have a devastating effect on your grade, and perhaps on your whole college career. It can even come back to haunt you much later in life, as some public figures have learned much to their embarrassment. Remember, if you plagiarize, you cheat yourself as much as anyone else. You cheat yourself not only out of learning how to use sources and document them properly, but you also cheat yourself out of gaining the self-confidence that comes with learning to speak for yourself.

## **Pacing Your Work and Meeting Deadlines**

It is to your benefit to allow time for one assignment to be graded and returned before you send in another, at least for the first few assignments. But give yourself the chance to learn and benefit from feedback on later assignments as well. You can't show improvement from one lesson to the next if you submit your assignments all at once, nor will you allow yourself to benefit from suggestions for improvement.

If you have a deadline to meet for finishing this course, please plan your time accordingly and allow for contingencies. Remember, you are probably hoping to get three hours of credit for completing this course. The usual semester is fifteen weeks long, but Self-paced Courses allows students to finish in a minimum of twelve. If you need a grade very quickly,

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however, stop and reconsider your reasons for taking this course. While your successful completion of the course is important to your friends, your family, and your instructor, your academic career is your own responsibility.