

English 101 — Composition
Instructor — Sheila McMullin

Fall 2011 Section
Office:
Office Hours:
Email:

*“Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnoses that would reduce your generative powers. ‘Common’ nouns are also proper nouns that disparage your singularity by classifying it into species. Break out of the circles; don’t remain within the psychoanalytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through!” Helene Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa**

Course Description: Welcome to Composition 101 and your introduction to college-level academic writing. This course is designed to provide you with insights into how to excel as an academic writer by preparing you with the standard conventions and expectations of the academy. While learning and understanding these conventions we will also investigate how to use them as methods of empowerment through exploring and investigating strategies for writing and researching about issues that you feel are important to you and to society. As a class we will learn to develop arguments that uncover the multiple causes of social issues and learn how to effectively write towards specific audiences while maintaining a sense of individuality and uniqueness.

Required Books: Writing Today, Richard Johnson-Sheehan & Charles Paine ISBN-10: 0205617441
The Little Seagull Handbook, Richard Bullock & Francine Weinberg ISBN 978-0-393-91151-0

Required Materials: One **journal** to be handed-in as a collective document multiple times throughout the semester. Pen or pencil.

Course Goals: This course is designed to help you improve your abilities to read, write, and think at a college level. In English 101, you will develop strategies to help you use writing as a tool for exploring and reflecting on your own ideas, as well as for informing and persuading your readers. For continued success in your writerly life, you will need to develop critical reading and research techniques to support your writing, and learn appropriate technologies to assist your writing. English 101 emphasizes writing as a rhetorical process: you will explore beneficial ways to break a writing task into smaller steps such as generating and organizing ideas, investigating your topic, creating early drafts, seeking feedback, and revising. You will also improve your ability to adapt your writing to the needs of an audience or a situation, and your ability to revise and edit your own writing.

Methods of Instruction: Most class meetings of English 101 will be interactive and involve a significant amount of student discussion, group peer, peer review and writing. Students may be asked to work individually as well as collaboratively as they investigate issues, practice writing strategies and techniques, learn research and critical reading approaches, and review their own and their peers’ writing. Students who attend regularly and stay engaged in class activities, who keep up with all of the assignments, and who block off sufficient time each week for thoughtful drafting and revising usually succeed in this class. If you were not capable of meeting each of the above goals, you would not be enrolled in this course. I am confident you will enjoy our time together this semester, and it is my intention to make the learning process as easy, painless, and stress-free for you as possible.

Course Requirements and Grading Percentages

| | | |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| 15% | Essay 1: This I Believe Essay, 750-900 words | Due: Week 4 |
| 20% | Essay 2: Scholarship Essay, 1,200-1,500 words | Due: Week 8 |
| 25% | Essay 3: Researched Argument for Change, 1,200+ words | Due: Week 13 |
| 10% | Essay 4: Writing To Save The World, 500-750 words & Presentation | Due: Week 15 |
| 5% | Submitted piece to outside source | Due: By Week 14 |
| 10% | Homework, Short Assignments, Research Journal | |
| 15% | Class Participation, Grammar Presentation, Publication Presentation, Peer Review Sessions | |

Submitting Class Work: Assignments will be due in class or electronically; refer to weekly schedule for submission instructions.

Saving your work: Save all of it! Save the electronic copies of all of your drafts as well as hard copies with comments from me or your peers. Back up your files on a flash drive, CDs, dropbox, google docs, etc so you will still have your work if your computer crashes unexpectedly.

Format of Essays: All essays must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Font: Times New Roman, 12 point
- MLA style black ink, double-spaced, 1 inch margins on top, bottom, left and right
- MLA style name, date, course number, clearly labeled “first,” “second,” “final,” or whichever draft it is, plus word count in left-hand corner
- Numbered pages introduced by your last name in right-hand corner
- Stapled
- A 150-300 Post-Script Reflection
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Class Participation: This means you should be actively present, implying brain awareness as well as the basic courtesies of formal social gatherings. Participation is out of 50 points. Each class day is worth 1 point, up to a max of 42 points for the entire semester. If you miss class or are significantly unprepared, you earn a zero for the day. Class officially begins at 12:30 (72136) or 2:30 (72137) and you are always responsible for turning in any required work. Being late will result in the loss of half the day’s class-participation points. Also, if you miss an assignment from the beginning of class (journals, quizzes) you may lose those assignment points. However, in an emergency I would rather have you come late than not at all; if you get stuck in traffic but you

can get here 20 minutes late, please try to come and after class please inform me of your situation. For the final 8 points, you earn up to a 6 if you're doing the basics of engaging with the class; you'll earn up to an 8 if I see you regularly leaping in and making strong contributions; you'll earn a 5 or lower if you are frequently unprepared, inattentive, or disruptive.

If you miss a class, your first step is to do the assigned readings. Then, contact a classmate about what notes and activities you missed. After you have checked with your classmate, feel free to contact me with any specific and informed questions.

Record two classmates' contact information here:

Student Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Student Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Behavior Policies and Class Emergencies: Respect your classmates by turning off cell phones, iPods, etc. Interruptions involving these devices count as a zero participation grade for the day after my first asking to put them away.

Students pay for and attend this class to improve their reading, writing, and thinking skills. We cannot accept behavior that disrupts our learning. Any type of disrespect in the classroom toward another student or the instructor will result in the immediate dismissal of the offending student from class.

If at any time a fellow student is in need of medical attendance, I may contact the appropriate authorities or designate a specific student to call on my behalf. In these situations it is important to remember to remain calm and follow directions to ensure the safety of everyone, although chances are slim that we will ever have to deal with situations such as these during our time together.

English 101 Grading Policy: Students in English 101 **must earn a grade of C or higher to complete the 101 requirement**; students whose grades are lower than a C will earn an NC.

A grade of NC reflects the philosophy that learning to write in an academic setting is a developmental process and that some students may require more time in this development. Since this grade does not affect students' Grade Point Averages, students are not penalized for requiring additional time to meet the course requirements in ENGL101. Because of this policy, grades of Incomplete are not given in ENGL101.

Midterm Grades: In English 101, students receive a midterm letter grade based on the work of the first seven weeks of the course. The purpose of this grade is to help students find out how well they are doing in the first half of the course in order to make any adjustments necessary for success in the course as a whole. The work in the second half of the semester may be weighted more heavily, and so the midterm grade is not meant to predict the final course grade. Students may view their grade online as soon as it is recorded.

Course Grading Policy: In grading essays, I use the following general criteria:

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| A | 95-100 | B | 84-86 | C | 74-76 | D | 64-66 |
| A- | 90-94 | B- | 80-83 | C- | 70-73 | D- | 60-63 |
| B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D+ | 67-69 | F | 0-59 |

Revision Policy: You have the opportunity to revise major assignments for a higher score. If you have a question about which assignments are major or minor, please ask me. Revisions must demonstrate substantial change to the focus, support, approach, and/or organization of the essay in addition to comprehensive error correction, or they will be returned with no grade change. Revisions must be submitted with all previous drafts and completed **within two weeks** of the assignment's return to you. I will not regrade the assignment after the two week deadline.

Late Work Policy: Late assignments are those arriving any time after the instructed due date. Any late in-class work will result in the deduction of participation points. Late essay assignments will earn a deduction of half a letter grade for each calendar day it is late.

I have listed the due dates for major assignments. If you know now that you will be absent on any of these days, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements. Only after speaking with me first and with an acceptable reason, you may email me an assignment to avoid a grade penalty, but you must still turn in a hard copy on a date that we have agreed upon. Do not put work on or under my office door or on my desk if I am not there.

In those rare "life happens" events you have **one free pass** for any **one** essay or class assignment, to be up to three calendar days late without penalty. To qualify, you **must notify me on or before the scheduled due date (in person or by email)** and then submit the pass with the essay/assignment when you turn it in. I will not automatically give late work a pass. **This pass may only be used one time**, so choose wisely.

In a documentable emergency, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss what arrangements can be made.

Email Etiquette: From now through the rest of your academic and professional lives you will often use email to engage and interact with women and men in specialized fields to ask for advice, favors, and/or recommendations. In our technological age when your contact with an individual may never be in person, I believe it is extremely important to learn proper email etiquette. A formal email greeting could be just as important as the first handshake. Learning proper email etiquette also helps to ensure that you will receive a timely email that is also respectful and straightforward. Pay attention to the following strategies when emailing me about class-related items:

- When emailing any instructor or someone with whom you are not extremely familiar, it is respectful and rhetorically smart to provide proper introduction of yourself and reason for emailing in the subject heading and body of the letter. This shows your correspondent that you take yourself seriously and respect the opinion or official business of the correspondent. *Ex: Eng 101 Appointment to talk about paper.*
- In the body of your email, greet whomever you are writing: *Ex. Dear Professor, Hello Mr/Ms X.* Introduce your name and briefly explain the purpose of your writing.
- Ask specific questions and provide your contact information: *Ex. email or phone number.*
- Sign your email with a closing thank you and signature.
- Refrain from using capital letters that appear to be yelling at your correspondent and emoticons that may be viewed as inappropriate conversation.
- Reread your email for any typos.

Please note that I will not respond to any emails that do not adhere to this etiquette. Please allow 48 hours for a response email.

Statement on Plagiarism: Do not do it. In severe cases students who plagiarize can be expelled and lose any scholarship funding. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another source without giving that source credit—this includes Wikipedia and dictionaries. Writers give credit

through the use of accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or end notes; a simple listing of books, articles, and websites is not sufficient.

To help eliminate the persuasion of plagiarism we will be keeping a research/writing journal that will contain all of your research with proper citation and annotated commentary. It will be due at various points throughout the semester.

This class will include direct instruction in strategies for handling sources as part of our curriculum. However, students in composition classes must also take responsibility for understanding and practicing the basic principles listed below.

To avoid plagiarism, meet the expectations of a US Academic Audience, give their readers a chance to investigate the issue further, and make credible arguments, writers **must**

- put quotation marks around, *and* give an in-text citation for, any sentences or distinctive phrases (even very short, 2- or 3-word phrases) that writers copy directly from any outside source: a book, a textbook, an article, a website, a newspaper, a song, a baseball card, an interview, an encyclopedia, a CD, a movie, etc.
- *completely rewrite*—not just switch out a few words—any information they find in a separate source and wish to summarize or paraphrase for their readers, *and also* give an in-text citation for that paraphrased information
- give an in-text citation for any facts, statistics, or opinions which the writers learned from outside sources (or which they just happen to *know*) and which are not considered “common knowledge” in the target audience (this may require new research to locate a credible outside source to cite)
- give a *new* in-text citation for *each element* of information—that is, do not rely on a single citation at the end of a paragraph, because that is not usually sufficient to inform a reader clearly of how much of the paragraph comes from an outside source.

Writers must also include a Works Cited or References list at the end of their essay, providing full bibliographic information for every source cited in their essay.

If writers ever have questions about a citation practice, they should *ask their instructor!*

Instructors in the Composition Program support the George Mason Honor Code, which requires them to report any suspected instances of plagiarism to the Honor Council. All judgments about plagiarism are made after careful review by the Honor Council, which may issue penalties ranging from grade-deductions to course failure to expulsion from GMU.

Conferences: Conferences are a chance for you to ask any questions about upcoming papers or grades received for previous papers, although there is a 24-hour wait-to-talk-about-grade policy. Conferences are confidential and meant to foster open communication. If you have questions, please take advantage of my office hours or email me or talk to me after class to set up a conference time. All conferences will take place in my office in The Hub, Room 1232. I am happy to work with you on any of your concerns.

Inclement Weather and/or Cancelled Classes: In case of bad weather, you can check the GMU website at <http://www.gmu.edu> and look for a scrolling banner announcing delays or closings. If I must cancel class, I will notify you by GMU email as soon as possible. I may also email you directions for activities to complete before our next scheduled class meeting.

Students with special needs: If you are a student with a learning difference or special needs and you require academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

GMU Nondiscrimination Policy: George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or age. GMU shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.

GMU Email: Students must activate their Mason email account and check it regularly. For privacy reasons, all class-related emails will be sent only to students' official GMU email addresses.

Important Dates:

- Last Day to Add a Course:
- Last Day to Drop a Course:
- Selective Withdrawal Period:

The University Writing Center: Since you will be writing several papers in this course, you may want to visit the University Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>), located in Robinson A114, for assistance. The Writing Center is one of the best resources you will find on campus. They have an outstanding website that offers a wealth of online resources for student writers. You can schedule a 45-minute appointment with a trained tutor to help with any phase of the writing process. You can even obtain assistance with papers by visiting the online writing center at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/owl/index.html>, but please plan ahead and allow yourself at least 2-3 days to receive a response. Make an appointment via their website.

Essay Assignments (in brief):

Essay One: This I Believe (750-900 words)

In this essay you will draw from your own educational experiences to produce a narrative and reflective piece of writing to discover and define a personal belief that will help your audience understand your past, present, and future choices.

This I Believe essays are intended to be public: therefore, for the purpose of our learning I encourage you to write for a range of diverse and intelligent audiences extending past professor and classmates. To write this personal essay effectively, you must be bold to speak truthfully from personal experience, trials, successes and failures. Although the subject of the essay is you, writing your narrative effectively will not be simple. Here is an opportunity to think deeply and critically about yourself, the world around you, and the goals you wish to accomplish in a college environment. Be patient with your writing and ideas, giving yourself ample time to contemplate what it is you truly believe. Be honest and speak vividly. I expect the most you are willing to give. And I believe the more you give the more you receive in return. Follow these guidelines from **ThisIBelieve.org** to help navigate through the writing process and learn how to submit your essay to their website.

Essay Two: Scholarship Essay and Audience Analysis (1,200-1,500 words)

Here, you have the opportunity to research and apply for a scholarship, internship, or other professional development program for the 2012 academic year to help you either pay for school tuition or give you extra spending cash. You may find scholarship information on <http://financialaid.gmu.edu/>, search through internet databases for other scholarship alternatives, or think about Fulbright Scholarships and Study Abroad Programs. To be successful in completing this assignment you will need to find a scholarship in your field of

study (or possible field of study) that you are qualified for and write an essay that adheres to the organizations' criteria. You must exemplify the excellence and achievement goals that are the organizations' standard. You will need to become familiar with the organization (your audience) and write in a logical and cohesive manner to show how your qualities and experiences enable you to be the best candidate for this scholarship.

This essay assignment will be broken down into four parts of research, analysis, and narrative writing:

- (1) a compare and contrast analysis of two possible scholarship organizations to which you may want to apply with a focus more on the credentials of the organization, not your personal likes or dislikes of them: **1 ½ pages**
- (2) a scholarship proposal stating to which scholarship you are applying, analyzing the needs of that audience, and explaining why you are a reasonable candidate according to your audience analysis: **1 ½ pages**
- (3) an essay that answers the scholarship organization's questions: **2 pages**
- (4) a brief "how to" guide to successfully apply to a scholarship in your field of study: **1 ½ pages**

You will not be responsible for any letters of recommendation or resumes that the scholarship requires to earn a complete grade for this essay, but I do encourage you to request these letters of recommendation and work on your resume to apply since you have already done the work of the essay.

Essay 3: Researched Argument (1,300+ words)

The researched argument assignment asks you to pick a topic about which you feel passionate— a problem you see around you at the *local level* in Virginia, Washington D.C., or your hometown. Emphasis will be placed on the fact that this problem must be *specific* and *narrow* – in other words, not just “animal abuse” but rather “the problem of greyhound abuse in Fairfax County”; not “being *green*” but “supporting Virginia farmers by shopping at farmer’s markets”; not “women’s rights” but “equalizing representations of women’s history in D.C. museums.” You will write a thesis statement explaining why your problem is serious and/or what approach must be taken to solve it. You will support this thesis with at least one scholarly source and five credible sources, which could include government websites, magazines (the more recent issues the better for up-to-date statistics and reports) such as *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, or newspapers (the more recent issues the better for up-to-date statistics and reports) such as *The Washington Post*.

Essay Four: Writing to Save the World estimating (500-750 words)

In this assignment, you will radically revise your researched argument into a piece of writing or performance that has the potential to directly make a difference in the world. Do not underestimate your abilities and voice to be heard. The purpose of this revision can be to inform, educate, or inspire action, and can take almost any form, including more creative alternatives. For example, you could revise your paper into a letter to a senator, a song, a poster, a poem or a proposal.

A Few Notes on Assignments:

Journals: Most classes will begin or end with a writing prompt. You will answer these prompts in your journal. These prompts will ask you to think about the readings you have done, or to examine your own writing process. You can use your journal to brainstorm ideas for class discussion, and to pose questions for future investigation. You can also use your journals to think about how class material relates to your own life and experiences. Journaling will help you practice putting your ideas into writing, and because your journal is a free space to develop ideas and reflect on your writing process, you will not be graded on mechanics. Your journal grade is therefore exclusively based on whether you answered the prompts in detail with attention paid to a thoughtful and developing angle. I expect you to have at least two paragraphs worth of work for each journal

entry. I will collect your first two journal entries and provide general written feedback and then collect other entries three times during the rest semester in order to give you credit for your work.

I will give you two “free passes” on your journal entries without any need for explanation. You could use these to compensate for the journal points you miss due to two absences. If you simply don’t feel like answering a prompt, you can use a free pass. Use them wisely, however, as I will not make any exceptions on the number of free passes.

Wiki: As a class we will also contribute to our PBWorks Wiki. PBWorks Wiki is a great way to work collaboratively and keep everyone on the same page with instant classroom updates and conversation starters with individual pages that can be kept private for your and my eyes only or pages that we as a class create together as information centers.

Outside submission:

You are required to share at least one of the four formal writing assignments with an appropriate and approved outside reader/audience and provide me proof of this submission/sharing with a 300 word cover letter on why you chose this audience and what you hope your outside submission will accomplish. We will talk further about these in class before each assignment, but here are some examples:

- Submit to NPR’s This I Believe Web site
- Submit to the *GMU Review*, an anthology of undergraduate academic and creative writing.
- Submit it to *GMU Hispanic Culture Review*
- Submit it to the *GMU Broadside* Newspaper
- Mail a proposal to a political representative

Final Note: I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. I will inform you of the changes in class and on the wiki at least two class periods in advance. I am looking forward to the semester and the time we will be spending together. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions about the syllabus and/or schedule.

| | In-class Topics | Major Assignments Due | To Read |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Week 1 Aug 29 | Welcome! Introductions & Syllabus | Accept invite to PBWorks Wiki | “Why Arts Eduaction is Crucial” http://www.edutopia.org/arts-music-curriculum-child-development |
| Aug 31 | Wiki introduction <i>Belief</i> Beta Draft | Journal: 200 words about article and your goals for the semester | <i>Writing Today</i> Ch 14 Pgs 328-334 “Inventing Ideas and Pre-Writing” |

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|---|--|--|---|
| Sept 2 | NPR <i>This I Believe</i> essays for review | 300 Word Reflection on Beta Draft Post to Wiki before class begins Collect Student/Instructor Agreements Bring journals to class | <i>The Little Seagull Handbook</i> Pgs 46-49 “Personal Narratives” <i>Writing Today</i> Ch 3 Pgs 22-31 |
| Week 2 (No Class Sept 5) Sept 7 | Introduce <i>This I Believe</i> Essay Decoding Prompts and Rubrics | Three Sketches | Three TIB essays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Gates “Unleashing the Power of Creativity” • Albert Einstein “An Ideal of Service to Our Fellow Man • Yvette Doss “Finding Equality Through Logic” Check Wiki for hyperlinks |
| Sept 9 | Personal Narratives & Expanding the Writing Process | Post to Wiki by Saturday Mid-night notes on your choices Post Wiki Responses to 2 classmates’ choices by beginning of class | Two TIB essays of your choice |
| Week 3 Sept 12 | So What? Answering this question in your writing. Focusing on the theme of your Belief | | <i>Writing Today</i> Ch 4 Pgs37-45 “Memoirs” Library Reserves: <i>They Say, I Say</i> Ch 7 “So What? Who Cares?” Pgs 92-101 |
| Sept 14 | Peer Review & Next Draft Game Plan | <i>This I Believe</i> Draft Due | <i>Writing Today</i> Ch18 Pgs373-378 “Revising and Editing” Why I need you to say I http://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/mckinney-maddalena--i-need-you-to-say-i.pdf |
| Sept 16 | Description, dialogue, details & Avoiding clichés | Five highly descriptive sentences from TIB essays | <i>Writing Today</i> Ch 4 Pgs46-47 “Revising and Editing Your Memoir” Ch15 Pgs 344-345 “Organizing” Review Ch. 14 Pgs 331-334 “Using Heuristics” |



3-Day Late Pass

For any **one** essay or class assignment, you may be up to three calendar days late without penalty. To qualify, you **must notify me on or before the scheduled due date (in person or by email)** and then submit this pass with the essay/assignment when you turn it in. I will not automatically give late work a pass. This pass may only be used one time, so choose wisely. It cannot be taken back to be used for another assignment.

NAME:

ESSAY/ASSIGNMENT:

SCHEDULED DUE DATE:

MY NEW DUE DATE:

STUDENT/ INSTRUCTOR AGREEMENT FOR ENGLISH 101

I have received the course syllabus for English 101 taught in the fall of 2011 by Sheila McMullin at George Mason University, Fairfax. I agree to adhere to all policies and procedures. I understand the guidelines for student conduct, academic dishonesty, and grading procedure. I agree to come to class prepared with a positive attitude to learn and engage in the ways that I am able and try in the ways I am not yet fully acquainted with yet.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Sheila McMullin, Instructor