Comp I Syllabus

# Background Material

Instructor

Steve Kucharik

School Phone: 620-872-7620

E-mail: mrkucharik@gmail.com

Classroom: SCHS 132

Texts and Material

Required:

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Successful College Writing*. Sixth ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

McQuade, Donald and Robert Atwan, eds. *The Writer's Presence: A Pool of Readings.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003.

Recommended:

Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter S. Achtert. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

Catalogue Description

“This course applies the writing process in expressive and expository writing. Students will refine skills in diction; sentence structure; organization and development of ideas; grammar and mechanics; and critical thinking. Students are required to pass an in-class exit essay to determine whether they have met minimum competencies outlined in the syllabus and before they enroll in the next course of the semester.”

Objectives

Objectives for this class are as follows:

1. To improve each student’s writing skills.

2. To study patterns and techniques of exposition and use them effectively.

3. To improve critical reading skills and to aid student evaluation and interpretation of different types of writing.

4. To acquaint students with research methods and information sources.

5. To give students confidence and better judgment in their use of language

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by your performance in the following areas:

1. Papers (50% of your grade)
   1. Major Paper
   2. In-class essays
   3. Critical Writings
2. Vocabulary (30% of your grade)
   1. Vocabulary tests
   2. Assignments
3. Other (20% of your grade)
   1. Tests and quizzes
   2. Conferences
   3. “Submission” grades
   4. Other

Your college grades will be based on sections one and three. Vocabulary will not be a consideration.

# Vocabulary

As many of you have already discovered, I think vocabulary is an important part of English class. I have always had this material in my classes at the high school level as I am sure many of your parents or grandparents will tell you. They might also tell you how much they hated it. Oh well, so it goes. Some former students might even tell you they enjoyed vocab. In any event, I have always tried to make vocabulary more useful than just spelling.

In the past, however, vocabulary wasn’t much more than an old-fashioned spelling test. Sure, the assignment was vocabulary in the larger sense. I was trying to teach you about sentence structure, for instance. I was trying to introduce new words to you. The Friday quiz, though, was a good old fashion spelling test. Not that anything is wrong with that.

This year marks a change in direction. I will make the vocabulary element of the class truly vocabulary instead of spelling. How are you going to do that, King of Pinheadia? Simple. Instead of spelling the words on Friday, the test will consist of definitions. You will have to identify, for instance, which word best matches the definition. An alternative is to give a word. Then, you will have a list of definitions. You will pick the definition which best corresponds to the word. Yep, I am talking about a multiple guess test.

“What about cumulative vocabulary?”, you might ask. We are still doing that. In order to keep with the new approach above, I have to modify the cumulative test as well. The cumulative test will still follow each set of three vocabulary assignments. You will be presented, though, with definitions, for instance, for thirty of the sixty words in each set. That means your cumulative exam will be half of the words on the list, but you will be dealing with definitions and words. The tests will be on Scantron, so you will need a pencil.

The assignment portion will be much the same. Further, the assignment will be outlined with the first list. In addition, you will find each set, three word lists, posted on *Facebook* at a page called “I Love Vocab,” if you can imagine that. This allows you to work ahead on many of your assignments, or if you don’t get the list for some reason, you just have to look here. If I were working ahead, I would record the definitions and the part-of-speech although if you ask, I can tell you the type of sentences you will have to write as well. As always, you will have to write sentences that meet certain stipulations.

Just so you understand how vocabulary will work, here is an overview. On Friday, usually but not always, your assignment will be due, and you will take your test. You will also receive the list for the following week. On Thursdays, and this is a new wrinkle, we will go over the definitions that will be on the exam. In the past, I have given you twenty to thirty minutes to work on your vocabulary, this will replace that waste of time. During this time, I will be sure you have the same or similar definitions for the exam. On weeks I know will be short, we will move the test to Thursday. On occasions when we don’t have class on Friday, snow days, for instance, your assignment and test will be on the following Monday. In that case, you will still be responsible for the new list on that Friday; remember, you can find the vocabulary lists on *Facebook*.

Also, you will be expected to submit your assignments in a particular fashion. Your vocabulary will be submitted electronically. First, your work is to be typed and submitted as a hard copy when you take your test. In addition to your hard copy submission, you are to submit a copy to me as an attachment to an email. My address is [mrkucharik@gmail.com](mailto:mrkucharik@gmail.com). Your emailed copy will be filed for my use. Your hardcopy edition will be graded and returned to you.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, submitting work electronically means cheating becomes easier. Cheating will be handled as I have handled it in the past. The first cheater gets the skate. That means I am not going to bother with separating the perpetrator from the originator of the work. The second and following submissions bear the brunt of the blame. If you were the one that actually did the work, you can still get busted for cheating simply because your paper wasn’t the first one submitted. “That’s unfair,” you might scream in your voice of teen outrage. Yes, it is. I am not wasting time trying to figure out the chain of events. Besides, life just isn’t always fair. If it were, I would be filthy rich, and I wouldn’t be worried about such issues. Additionally, if you take sentences from another student and change the words, I won’t accept that sort of cheating either. Finally, if you copy your sentences from Dictionary.com, for instance, I will not accept them if you include material which, obviously, is not your own. In the past I received a sentence which included the name “Ferdinand de Saussure.” The chances of a high school student knowing an early 20th century linguist is slim and none. If I lined up the entire student body, faculty, administration of USD 466 and asked how many knew who “Ferdinand de Saussure” was, maybe, and that is iffy, one or two others would recognize the name. You copied your sentence from another source. I don’t applaud cheating. While I am on the topic, if you copy your sentences from the internet, you have to find sentences that both use the word and fit the sentence pattern stipulated by the assignment. That adds a degree of difficulty. If you bring your work to me, I will be glad to offer suggestions and help you, but I won’t do your work for you.

I think it is easier just to write my own sentences, but you can judge the level to which you will sink. As for me, I prefer to live in a world where my students do their own work and learn from it. I like thinking the best of my students. Foolish, I know.

# conferences

Here is another change in operating procedure. I plan on using conferences extensively this year. You and I will spend lots of time discussing your written. I am trying to change the focus of my efforts. Rather than being the oyer and terminer[[1]](#footnote-1) of your writing. Your work will be evaluated, in part, by *Paper Rater*, so I am free to help you with your writing. When I was responsible for grading your work, I could’t do too much, or I would be grading my own work. Now, I can focus my attention on your writing rather than my grading. I hope that is good for both of us.

Conferences will be both pre- and post-writing. In other words, we will talk about what you plan to write and what you did write. At some conferences, we will be talking about what you are going to write and the approach you are going to take. I will offer my suggestions and try to stir you toward certain goals and away from problems. In other conferences, we, you and I, will edit and revise your paper so that you can get the highest grade possible. However, I am not going to do the writing. I will offer suggestions and show you how to make the corrections. Then, you can decide what you include or don’t include.

Since *Paper Rater* will play an important part in your evaluation, you can use the program to evaluate your paper as you write. In fact, we will probably do that during a conference. The suggestions offered are usually very appropriate. Between those suggestions, my suggestions, and your hard work, who knows, you might become a better writer. We will see.

# Class rules

1. You should submit work before you are gone if the absence is planned or make arrangements with me. If you miss, it is on you not your parents.
2. Check your attendance and grades on the internet. You are responsible for making sure it is correct and up-to-date.
3. Computer failures are not my fault.
4. Use *Word* for your typed assignments. *Word* is the standard. All work must be submitted in Times New Roman or Arial font in size 10, 11 or 12.
5. Work not meeting the established criteria will not be accepted.
6. Work is not always returned as a classroom set. I return papers when I get sufficient numbers graded to warrant return.
7. You will be doing a great deal of writing in this class. Be prepared for that.
8. I do not applaud the simplest efforts you make. If you wish lavish praise, do work which is deserving of praise.
9. All make-up work is given before or after school. No other time is available for make-up work. You may also submit make-up work during ASP time by arrangement with the ASP instructor and myself.
10. I expect you to take notes.  I will probably check your notes a couple of times during the semester.
11. Do not call my home. Ever.
12. No, you may not bring your papers by my house.
13. I expect that you will read assigned material before class.
14. All typed work will conform to the MLA.
15. Keep the area around your desk neat. I expect that you will police the area around your desk.
16. You will be expected to bring a note from the office if you are not on time to class. “On time” is defined as in your desk with your materials out ready for class.
17. Tests and quizzes will be routinely given. Quizzes may be announced or unannounced.
18. You will be expected to provide submit work both electronically and hard copy.
19. No Ipods, mp3 players, CD, DVD, tape recorders, 8-tracks, record players allowed unless permission has been granted.  Ask if you can listen to music rather than assuming.
20. Cell phones may be confiscated.  However, you may use your cell phone with my permission during times when they are needed for research or during periods in class when you have been given permission.  Calling or texting, though, is not acceptable. If you are told to place your devices on the tray on the board, do so without question.
21. The course calendar may be changed at any time for any reason. Usually, the reasons are rational; however, they may be arbitrary and capricious.
22. If you want to reach me, e-mail is the best. I rarely check my phone messages. Leave one if you wish, realize, though, that I probably won't check it.
23. Use pen for written. I don’t accept work submitted in pencil.  However, you will be taking many vocabulary exams as well as other exams on Scantron sheets, so you will need a pencil on test days.
24. Send your papers as an attachment to an email when you submit your work. Be sure your attachment and email have substantive titles so that I can easily understand what you have submitted.
25. Obviously, I don’t hear as well as I might. I have a mid-range hearing loss, but the lady who gave the test said that I don’t need hearing aids unless I want them. I don’t want them because they are expensive. Now, mid-range hearing loss is the range in which most female voices fall. That means I don’t hear girls voice as well as I might. When I ask you to repeat yourself, speak up a little. You don’t have to speak slower just louder. If I ask to repeat yourself three or four times, vary your voice a little. Sooner or later, we will find a compromise. You could, I suppose, buy me a hearing aid.
26. I am getting to be an old man. I probably had your parents as students, too. Yes, I am cranky at times. Usually, it isn’t anything personal; just bear with it, and it will pass. Also, I am cynical not sarcastic.
27. No, you may not get a drink of water. That is what the passing period is for.
28. No, you may not drink water in class.
29. We are not equals. I get to do things you don’t. “Why?”, you might ask. Simple, I have earned that right.
30. At times, I have to leave class for a variety of reasons. If I do that is not a reason for you to go to the water fountain. Earn your rep on someone beside me. Sit in your chair, talk quietly, and be ready for my return. You are old enough to be treated as a mature person. Live up to that expectation.
31. If you ask, I will usually let you use the rest room unless you abuse that privilege. Take too long, walk around the halls, etc. and you will lose the privilege.
32. I don’t assign work that I am not going to grade.
33. If you don’t want to do the work you have been assigned, don’t do it. However, don’t beg to do work when you discover you aren’t going to pass.
34. I take fire, intruder, tornado drills seriously. I expect you to do the same.
35. While you won’t have an assigned seat, you are expected to sit forward in the class.
36. While I am working with students individually, you are to be working on assignments.

# statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism

1. not citing the source for words or ideas which are not your own;

2. incorrect documentation in the body and in the works cited;

3. carelessness or sloppiness in the research which results in faulty documentation;

4. use of purchased or acquired papers;

5. submission of work not prepared during semester in which it was assigned.

Punishment for plagiarism:

1. First offense will result in rewriting a new assignment;

2. A second offense will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

1. I realize you don’t know what this means, but it is cool to use, so I did. You are a member of the internet generation, look it up. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)