

Diablo Valley College

Spring 2007

Instructor: Nancy D. Zink
Office Hours: MW3:30-4:30
TTH 2:30-4
By Appointment

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English 122: Freshman English: Composition and Reading

Introduction: Welcome to this reading and writing course. Consider this writing course as an invitation to compose and share your own writing about your beliefs, ideas, feelings, readings, and experiences. You will soon realize that this means much more than just writing down some statements on paper. Good writing evolves from an intricate process of thinking and reading, tentatively forming early ideas, reshaping thoughts even as you discover your meaning through writing, drafting, sharing with readers, revising, sharing again, reworking and editing. Even if this process is new to you, and even if writing is difficult, you can become a confident and capable writer if you are willing to work diligently, honestly and regularly on activities and assignments. This course is designed to offer you the tangible strategies you need in order to be successful as well as the specific help all writers need to strengthen their skills--practice, response, information and encouragement.

Course Description and Goals: This course, through both informal and formal modes of writing (e.g., essays, journals, drafts, etc.), will focus on “coaching” or “guiding” each student as he/she writes. Such “coaching” will emphasize multiple revisions of drafts, the use of peer collaborative groups, and one-on-one conferences with the instructor when needed. The expected goals of these activities are that each student’s writing will communicate meaning to the designated audience, and that the writing will achieve the student’s intended purposes whether those purposes be academic, professional or personal.

We will concentrate in particular on the following:

1. Sentence and paragraph development
2. Selection of topics
3. Focus
4. Elaboration and exemplification
5. Organization
6. Voice
7. Audience awareness
8. Strategies for various stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing
9. Critical reading skills
10. Use of peer and teacher response for revision

Course activities will include sentence and paragraph development lessons, group discussions, journal writing activities, peer response groups, large group critiques of essays, and other activities.

Textbook and Materials Needed:

Required Texts: The Writer's Presence, 4th ed. by McQuade & Atwan, Bedford/St. Martin's
Rules for Writers, 5th ed. by Diana Hacker, Bedford/St. Martin's

Other Materials: 2" to 3" ring sized loose leaf binder with dividers so you can make a book of all of your materials--your writing journal, class notes, handouts/assignments, all drafts of work written for the course

Dictionary/thesaurus

Colored folders – 9:30 TTH: 2-3 **red** folders
12:30-2 TTH.: 2-3 **blue** folders

Course Requirements: The course requirements consist of:

1. Multiple drafts of 4-5 major essays
2. Informal writing assignments
3. Active participation in peer groups and class discussions
4. Assigned readings in the texts
5. Home writing/practice assignments
6. Regular attendance

Essay Assignments: Either your peers or your instructor will comment/respond to the drafts of your assignments. **All drafts of all papers MUST BE TYPEWRITTEN, DOUBLE SPACED IN 12 POINT TRADITIONAL FONT. All required copies of the assignment** must be submitted by the date due in the appropriate folder or the assignment will be returned and marked late. You will get additional information about formatting major assignments during the 2nd week of classes.

Note: Comments made on final papers will focus on each paper's structure and content rather than grammar/usage issues. Students are expected to have control of the conventions of English, skills gained prior to entering this level of college English. Grammar/usage issues are not part of the course of study for this level since students should already be proficient. Should specific problems become apparent for a large portion of the class, I will review those specifics. I strongly recommend students pay close attention to editing and proofreading of the papers before handing them in since poor grammar/usage **will** affect the final grade for the paper—see grading criteria at the end of this syllabus.

I will mark/note the grammar errors on your papers and you will be required to identify the error pattern and then to correct those errors. This correction and identification of your patterns of grammar error must be done for each major paper. Papers with too many grammar and usage errors will be returned with an NRG mark. You can rewrite one of the first 2 papers; if you receive an NRG on more than one paper, the NRG will equal an F.

Peer Groups: Since response to writing is central to improvement in writing, this course gives students the opportunity to receive responses to their writing from a number of people as well as offer insight on other group members' writing. Specifically, each student will work with peers in small groups, reading and responding to one another's writing. Students will then use information gained from peer response sessions, as well as insight acquired from rereading and rethinking their own papers, to revise subsequent drafts. Students are expected to offer useful, specific information that will enable a student to strengthen his/her draft and eventually the final paper.

Note: The peer response class activity as well as the points allocated for it cannot be made up if missed—regardless of the reason for missing the class.

Students cannot submit drafts for peer evaluation if they are not going to be in class.

Conferences: Another form of response involves talking about writing with the instructor. You should consider talking with me at least twice during the semester. Conferences are intended to be times in which students can “bounce around ideas” for topics, discuss problematic areas, talk through “stuck points,” or receive feedback on possible ways to proceed. Each student has the responsibility to bring to the conference sessions drafts of the work in progress and specific questions about each piece.

Students cannot have more than one conference a week and conferences are limited to 15 minutes each. So, students should prepare for conferences so they can get the most out of them.

Note: **Reminder--Rewrite opportunities can only occur after a conference.**

Journal Writing: Specific types of informal and discovery-type writing will be assigned for journal writing. Such writing will enable students to learn about their own writing process and to understand the readings assigned in the required texts more fully.

Grading Policy: The final grade for this course is based on both graded and ungraded writing, individual home assignments, participation in peer response groups and group discussions, attendance, and the quality of a student’s writing at the end of the semester. All drafts of each assignment, not just the final draft, must be submitted in order to receive a grade for that assignment. **No single drafts of assignments will be accepted; they will be returned without being graded.**

Students will be able to rewrite only one of the first three assignments; this rewrite is only possible if the original paper was on time, if a conference with the instructor is scheduled/completed, and if a written paragraph describing the changes is handed in at the conference.

Attendance Policy: Since this course includes both in-class writing and peer response group participation, your attendance is important. These activities help you to understand and reinforce the elements of good writing and provide you practice in incorporating these elements in your writing. Excessive absences, therefore, will negatively affect your final grade and/or could result in your being dropped from the course. Students with more than the equivalent of two weeks of absences (6 hours) may be dropped. The final responsibility for following through and officially dropping the class is the student’s.

Late Papers: Major papers are due at the beginning of class on the date identified for that assignment. After the beginning of class, papers are considered late. Lateness will result in a full grade drop for each class day the paper is late. Be sure you organize your folders before class to ensure you have all required elements in the folder. You are responsible for ensuring that all required elements are in the folder when you come to class prepared to turn the paper in. NOTE: Absence for a peer response session, **regardless of the reason**, or untyped drafts automatically results in a loss of points for that writing assignment; these points cannot be made up.

Other assignments: In class assignments, home/regular assignments **cannot** be turned in late or made up if missed, **regardless of the reason** for missing the due date or the particular absence from class. Pop quizzes cannot be made up if missed. Any other announced tests or quizzes can be made up in the Testing Center before the test or quiz is returned. Once the test or quiz is returned, it cannot be made up. Be sure to check with other students on what you miss during class to ensure you keep up with the assignments. Note final paragraphs of the syllabus for additional information on work missed because of an absence.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is both ethically and legally unacceptable; it is the equivalent of theft. If a paper, or any part of it, is plagiarized, the student will receive a zero for that assignment, and, if the assignment is a major paper, the student will receive an F for the course. Never submit work which is not yours or does not have a source citation where required. I will not accept essays I have not seen and/or heard evolving in class or in conference.

Plagiarism may show up in the following forms:

- a. Verbatim copying without proper acknowledgment.
- b. Paraphrasing/summarizing without proper acknowledgment.
- c. Putting together a patch-work paper from diverse sources without acknowledging the sources.
- d. The out-and-out theft of someone else's significant idea(s) without proper acknowledgment.
- e. Using the same ideas as another student in a paper thereby rendering the papers as virtually the same.

One key to understanding plagiarism is that the student's intentions are not necessarily the problem. A student can be guilty of plagiarism without necessarily intending to "cheat" on an assignment.

Formal Grading Criteria

These are the evaluation criteria on which I base my responses to your writing and, eventually, your grades. You will also use these criteria: 1) to help you identify both the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing; 2) to evaluate peer group responses and address assignment guidelines; and 3) to assist you in understanding the grades you receive. In short, the following six criteria will provide us with a common vocabulary to talk about and assess your writing throughout the semester.

1. central idea
2. organization/coherence
3. support
4. voice
5. sentence structure/diction
6. grammar/punctuation/spelling

Following is a brief explanation of what these categories mean in terms of letter grades.

The A (Outstanding) Paper

1. Central Idea: clearly defined, insightful and appropriate for audience and purpose.
2. Organization/Coherence: essay structure and paragraphing that reflect a clear, logical and smooth development of the central idea.
3. Support: full and clear explanation of ideas supported with relevant and specific detail.
4. Voice: concerned, involved and animated.
5. Sentence Structure/Diction: smooth and varied sentence structure, appropriate and fresh word choice.
6. Grammar/Punctuation/Spelling: only rare or isolated errors.

The B (Excellent) Paper

In terms of the first four categories, the B paper is similar to the A paper, except that it does not have some of the distinguishing marks of the A paper. For instance, the central idea of the B paper, although it is defined and appropriate, lacks the insight of the A paper. The organization may be clear but it may be predictable. The support in a B paper, although relatively full and specific, is not as extensive or as varied as the A paper.

The B paper also contains only rare or isolated errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

The C (Sound) Paper

The C paper adequately fulfills its purpose. It has many commendable features, certainly including a central idea and a recognizable organizational structure. It provides support for its thesis through specific examples and elaboration. It contains, at most, only isolated errors in grammar and punctuation, with only occasional misspellings. The sense of audience and purpose is there, and the authorial voice may show engagement with the topic.

Despite these strengths, the C paper may be limited in one or more of the categories above. For instance, the central idea may be too general or too predictable. Organization may lack some necessary transitions. Support may be insufficient in places. In general, however, this is a sound and acceptable piece of writing.

The D (Weak) Paper

The D paper is seriously weak in a least one of the six categories. For example, its central idea may be very loosely defined, or it may contain occasional serious errors in grammar or punctuation, or frequent misspellings, or its support may be often vague. In no case, however, does the D paper have any of the severe deficiencies noted in the following descriptions of the NC (no credit) papers.

The F (Unacceptable) Paper

The F paper has one or more of the following characteristics:

- No recognizable central idea OR
- No clearly defined or apparent plan of development OR
- Disunified or incoherent paragraphs OR
- Consistently vague and non-specific support OR
- Consistently inaccurate or inappropriate word choices OR
- Frequently awkward sentence structure OR
- Frequent errors, both major and minor, in grammar, punctuation or spelling

If a student has too many grammar/usage errors, his/her paper will be returned with an NRG notation—not ready for grading. Since a student can have **one** rewrite for one of the first three papers, he/she will be able to revise/correct and then resubmit this one paper. If a student submits a second major paper with too many grammar/usage errors, that paper will be given and F.

Grade Equivalents

4-5	Major Papers	60%
	In-class writings	10%
	Assignments -- varied points each	20%
	peer response	
	journals	
	regular/daily assignments	
	Participation/Effort	10%

A final grade of C is passing for English 122. Any work not submitted will be given a 0 and averaged as such with the other points received. Home assignments are due on the specific dates and will not be accepted late. Be sure to get 2-3 phone numbers or emails of students in the class so you can keep up with assignments you might miss; please **do not call me or email me to explain what you missed in class or to identify your homework assignments. Also, in the unlikely event you will be absent, be sure you have made arrangements with someone to pick up any photocopies of materials which were distributed in class. You are responsible for having the required materials at class time. An absence, regardless of the reason, is not an appropriate excuse for missing work or being unprepared for class.**

Tutoring Option: Tutoring is available in our English Tutoring Lab in LC105. Go to LC105 to sign up for a tutor who will work with you two hours a week, to find out about drop-in appointments, to find out the hours for the Writing Lab in LC202, and to learn more about possible on-line tutoring. If you feel you might need tutoring help, sign up immediately for an assignment to a tutor who might help you address your needs. **Tutors do not edit papers;** instead they help you to understand what your problems are and how to address them.