**ALI 245: High Intermediate Writing Skills (2 units)**

Section No.: 10153

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| Instructor: Eric H. Roth | Office: JEF 215A |
| Classroom: TTH 209 | Email: ericroth@usc.edu |
| Class time: TuTh 9:30-10:50 | Office Hours: MW 10:30-noon  and by appointment |
| Midterm Exam: 10/7/14 | Capstone Exam: 11/20/14 |
| **Semester Holidays:**  Thanksgiving 11/27 | **Last Day of Class:**  12/4 |

**According to USC:** *“The ability to communicate effectively in English - to read, write and speak the language fluently - is vital to your success as a university student, and may also serve as a vital tool in your future academic and professional success. USC graduate students are therefore expected to demonstrate proficiency in English at all levels of graduate study.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Course description**

This specialized course has been designed to give you the academic writing skills needed to succeed in an American university and be prepared for an academic or professional world. Readings and assignments cover major components of academic writing, including genre-specific rhetorical organization and styles, data commentaries, paraphrasing, summarization, and citation. These units also cover specific language issues (grammar, vocabulary, academic and professional register) that can be difficult for non-native speakers of English.

**Course objectives**

This course develops your academic and professional writing skills. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

* Craft texts in different genres (e.g., summary, critique, problem statement, annotations) for a variety of purposes and audiences.
* Paraphrase and summarize materials
* Evaluate texts, support assertations, and write critiques,
* Analyze complicated materials and provide a synthesis of academic papers.
* Choose an appropriate vocabulary that matches audience expectations
* Provide and receive constructive feedback to peers on written work,
* Edit, and revise written work
* Deploy an appropriate citation style (e.g., IEEE, APA, MLA)
* Use standard written English’s conventions or grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
* Write original documents and research papers that meet academic standards

Proficiency in English. USC Graduate Admissions: International Students. Retrieved on Oct. 18, 2012, from http://www.usc.edu/admission/graduate/international/english.html

*“If any man wishes to write in a clear style, let him be first clear in his thoughts.”*

**– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), German writer[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Course materials**

Swales, John M., & Feak, Christine B. (2012) *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

(ISBN: 978-0-472-03475-8)

In addition to textbook required for the course, handouts and readings have been loaded onto USC Blackboard website: https://blackboard.usc.edu for course assignments and readings. You will find these under the “Toolbox” and Course Documents sections of Blackboard. During the course, you will also be required to find academic journals that specifically address issues related to your final research paper.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments are not accepted except in the case of serious personal emergencies and with the prior approval of your instructor. You should therefore work on assignments well before the due date.

**Office Hours**

Your instructor has scheduled regular office hours for one-to-one meeting with students. Office hours provide you with a time to ask questions and discuss the course content. If you are unable to attend the scheduled office hours, please feel free to contact your instructor and set up a time to meet.

**ALI attendance policy**

Improving proficiency in a second language requires practice; hence, it is important that you not miss classes. If you find it absolutely necessary to be absent from class because of illness or an emergency, keep in mind that you are responsible to master all information presented during your absence. Do not ask the instructor to repeat important information - identify a classmate who will help you.

More than 8 hours of absence will result in a course grade of NC (no credit). Absence is counted for *any* reason, including illness, emergencies, and conference attendance. (Athletes, please note that a written excuse for absence due to competitions must be filed with the ALI Student Advisor.)

**Assessment:** This is a credit/no credit (CR/NC) class, which means that you will not receive a final letter grade (A/B/C/F) on your USC transcript. Assignments are given to prepare for and practice material that is covered in class. Since this is a proficiency-based course designed to help improve your academic writing skills, your proficiency in these skills at the *end* of the course determines whether you will need an additional class or not.

In other words, even if you receive credit for ALI 245 for completing all the assignments, you may be required to take an additional writing class if your writing level does not meet standards for release. Therefore, it behooves you to do your best on each assignment. Do not expect your writing to magically improve simply by coming to class and putting the minimum effort into your assignments. It will take considerable, focused effort on your part to see the "significant, meaningful, and verifiable progress" that is expected. Is that clear?

**Course Assignments & Exams**

We will have in-class tests and homework during the semester. These assignments serve as self-assessment for you to see your strengths and weaknesses as well as for the instructor to see areas where additional instruction is necessary. Your performance on the in-class midterm, final exam, and the final research paper, together with the on-going evaluation of your work will determine whether you will need additional classes.

To help the instructor evaluate your writing progress and proficiency, the course grading will be based on a total of 1000 points with the following breakdown.

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| **Assignments** | **Percentage of Total Grade** |
| Professional Portfolio (50 points)  Other Academic/professional writings (150) | 10%  30% |
| Midterm Exam (100 points) | 10% |
| Final Exam (100 points) | 20% |
| Final Research paper (100 points) | 30% |

**Exams**

ALI 245 exams focus, naturally, of writing skills. Students are required to pass the midterm and final exams with a score equivalent to 70% in order to receive credit for the course. The midterm exam will include course material covered up to that point and an extensive writing exercise. The last, capstone,exam, which is cumulative, will require students to demonstrate writing skills reflecting significant, meaningful, and verifiable progress.

**Other Writing Assignments**

Graded writing assignments will be assigned at the discretion of the instructor and may include the following: Reaction papers, Summary, Essay, Extended Definition, Process Description, Literature Review, Annotated Bibliography, Critical Reviews (of books, products, or movie), Data Commentary, and other assignments.

Please note that although the final research paper is rather lengthy (12-16 pages), each part is originally written as a separate assignment. The final research paper includes edited and revised prior assignments combined into a rewritten final document. We will climb a high mountain in many small steps.

**Professional Writing**

Students will have the opportunity to develop a professional writing portfolio consisting of cover letter, resume, bio-statements, etc. Other aspects of professional writing, such as composing effective emails and letters of complaint may be discussed in class.

**Final Research Paper**

The final research paper serves as the captsone project that demonstrates the skills learned and deployed during the semester. The purpose of the final project is to provide you with an experience of writing a research paper as a microspecialist in a specific area for general audiences. The final project requires demonstration of a number of distinct academic writing skills in the creation, documentation, and presentation (which we will cover in the course of the semester) of your paper.

*“Find a subject you care about, and which in your heart, you feel others should care about. It is in the genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.”*

**Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007), American novelist** *[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Please note, your topic must be approved prior to officially starting your research writing process. You may NOT change your topic without instructor’s approval. Therefore, be thoughtful and conscientious about your topic choice and selecting appropriate sources. The target audience will be a non-specialist audience, and Illumin, the award-winning USC online magazine will serve as our default target publication. (Visit illumin.usc.edu to see the quality, depth, and range of articles.)

Write an original research paper on a significant topic that is of interest to you. The paper should develop the topic (i.e., the problem) with relevant, scholarly sources and discuss the subject with ample evidence. A problem-solution paper, for instance, would clearly provide the background context of a problem, define the problem, examine both short-therm and longterm consequences, and examine a range of potential solutions. Finally, this type of paper would evaluate the solutions. (See Unit 3 of our textbook.)

The Final Research Paper must meet the following requirements:

* Approximately 7-pages in length (double-spaced)
* 12-point font in Times New Roman, Arial, or another standard font
* An abstract with key words
* Minimum of two illustrations (e.g., table, graph, chart) with data commentary
* Minimum of eight appropriate sources (half preferably peer-reviewed journals)
* Documentation of sources using the style in your field (e.g., APA, IEEE)
* An annotated bibliography of five sources (each one page and not counted toward the seven-page minimum).
* “Reference/Works Cited” page at the end of your essay where you list the sources you used in your paper (not counted towards the seven page minimum)

Final papers must be turned in by the due date unless a student has experienced a serious emergency and the instructor has given an extension. In addition to submitting a hardcopy of the paper, students must additionally submit their final paper to Turnitin via Blackboard. Remember that plagiarism remains forbidden, prohibited, and verboten. Questions?

**CONFERENCES:** We will meet at least three times individually this semester to discuss your progress in your academic writing skills. These student conferences replace class sessions so they are mandatory. You may also choose to contact me by email or speak to me directly if you want to have questions about ALI 245 and our assignments. My office hours are posted, and we can arrange to meet at another mutually convenient time if necessary. Conferences usually last between 10-15 minutes, but may run longer

**USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences.  Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>.  Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.  You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety whole USC community.  Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.  *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.  *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [*http://emergency.usc.edu/*](http://emergency.usc.edu/)will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Use of Technology**

Technology continues to transform almost all aspects of modern living. Naturally, technology opens new ways of learning and writing in our 21st century classroom. We will extensive use Blackboard to share resources, list assignments, and collect some homework. We will also extensively use other computer software in this writing course.

Please remember, however, the importance of being courteous and attentive to the professor and your fellow classmates when they are speaking. Simple translation: enjoy social media on your own time and let’s focus on developing our English language writing skills during class. You will also be asked to bring your laptop to class several times during the semester for in-class writing, research topics, and re-writing assignments.

**Classroom courtesy:** As a courtesy to your classmates and teacher, please make sure that your cell phones are silent during class time and refrain from personal chit-chat during class. Text-messaging can also be distracting so it is also forbidden during class. Also, while it is understandably easier to speak your native language to others from your home country, this can be uncomfortable to others in the class and certainly defeats the purpose of being in an English class, so please use English only in the classroom.

Finally, we may discuss a range of topics in class where opinions differ. We will use our skills as writers and speakers in English to express our ideas, provide examples, and engage with our classmates. Since we do want to both understand and be understood, it also behooves us to remain civil in all of our classroom discussions.

Questions, as ever, are welcome. Shall we begin?

**Course Schedule\***

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| **WEEK** | **TASK** | **HOMEWORK** |
| 1 | Diagnostic Exam  Introductions – Casual and Formal | Response Writing  Blog post Bio Statement, |
| 2 | Course Overview – Emails and Letters-  Best practices | Reaction Paper –  Summary Writing |
| 3 | Professional Writing  (Bio Statements, Resume, Cover Letter, Email) | Professional Writing |
| 4 | Cont. Professional Writing – Hedging Language  Academic Integrity & Citation | Cont. revising prof writings Unit 1, TBD |
| 5 | Approach to Academic Writing  Unit 1, pp. 4-49 | Unit 2, TBD  Summary-Evaluations |
| 6 | General-Specific Text  Unit 2, selections from pp. 55-87  Compare and Contrast | Term Definitions  Take-home Practice |
| 7 | MIDTERM EXAM –  Compare and contrast  Annotated Bibliography | Two more summary-evaluations  Reflection essay |
| 8 | Editing – Outline  Midterm Conferences | Unit 3, TBD  Detailed Outline - Revised |
| 9 | Problem-Solution Text  Unit 3, pp. selections from pp.100-130; 137-8 | Unit 4, TBD  Rewrite PS paper |
| 10 | Data Commentary and infographics  Unit 4, selections from pp. 139-180 | Data commentaries  Adding another source |
| 11 | Unit 6: Critiques and Reviews  Write Film/product review | Blog post  First draft – Final Paper |
| 12 | Writing Workshop  Grammar review – overcoming good mistakes | Revising First Draft Paper  Study for Final Exam |
| 13 | FINAL EXAM  Course Evaluation | Writing Second Draft |
| 14 | Editing workshop  Final Paper Conference | Editing – Again- Final Paper |
| 15 | Final Paper Presentation  \*\***FINAL PAPER DUE**\*\* | Rest |

*\*Subject to change at instructor’s discretion*

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quotes on Writing. Quotefreaks. Retrieved on January 6, 2013 from http://quotefreaks.com/quotes-on-artists/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Engstorm, Elizabeth. “It Doesn’t Matter What You Write.” *Chicken Soup for the Writer’s Soul: Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit of Writers.* Deerfield: Health Communications Inc. 2000.123-127. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)