**ALI 255: Advanced Writing Skills (2 units)**

Section No.: 10149

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| Instructor: Eric H. Roth | Office: PSD 106E |
| Classroom: SOS43 | Email: ericroth@usc.edu |
| Class time: Friday 9:00-11:50 | Office Hours: TuTh 12:30-1:30  and by appointment |
| Midterm Exam: 2/24/17 | Capstone Exam: 4/21/17 |
| **Semester Holidays:**  3/12/17 - 3/19/17 | **Last Day of Class:**  4/28/17 |

**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 advanced 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**

REQUIRED: 50 Steps to Improving Your Academic Writing. By Chris Sowton. Garnet Education. 2014. ISBN: 978-1-85964-6557

Recommended: What Color is Your Parachute? Guide to Rethinking Resumes. By Richard N. Bolles. Berkeley. Ten Speed Press. 2014. ISBN 978-1-60774-657-7

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 both specialist articles from academic journals and non-specialist, general articles 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 (200) | 10%  40% |
| Midterm Exam (50 points) | 10% |
| Final Exam (50 points) | 10% |
| Final Research paper (150 points) | 30% |

**Exams**

ALI 255 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.

The Final Research Paper must meet the following requirements:

* Approximately 10-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.

**Academic integrity**

USC upholds high standards of academic integrity. ALI, in keeping with these university standards, has to ensure that international students, new to the university understand, internalize, and practice academic integrity. Copying another writer’s work, improperly “paraphrasing” or forgetting to mention sources, and getting outside assistance with your work constitute academic dishonesty and can have serious consequences on your status as a student at USC. In this course, we will discuss ways to demonstrate academic integrity in your work (for information on how to avoid plagiarism, see http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad\_ai.htm.While I believe in "good mistakes", copying another person’s paper and claiming that work as your own or “forgetting” to use quotation marks counts as plagiarism, and falls into the "awful mistake" category. Is that clear?

Please note that while it may be helpful to have a native speaker proofread a paper for a class in your major, unauthorized collaboration would be considered cheating in this class. We want to evaluate your English skills, not someone else’s command of English. We will, however, review many strategies to avoid wandering into dangerous waters. Bottomline: 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

**Students with disabilities**

Any student requiring accommodation based on a disability is required to register with the Disability Services and Programs office (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved recommendations can be obtained through DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located at 3601 Watt Way, GFS 120. It and is open 9:00am-5:00pm, M-F. The DSP phone number is (213) 740-0776.

**Use of Technology**

Our class meets in the fall of 2015. Therefore, computer use as a tool to learning is encouraged in our 21st century classroom. 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 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?

**Fall 2016 ALI 255 Course Schedule\***

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| **WEEK** | **TASK** | **HOMEWORK** |
| 1 | Diagnostic Exam  Introductions – Casual and Formal | Bio Statement,  Read Rethinking Resumes |
| 2 | Course Overview – Emails, resumes, and Letters-  Best practices - Dr. King’s “Letter” | Reaction Paper –  Summary Writing |
| 3 | Professional Writing – Round 2 (Bio Statements, Resume, Cover Letter, Email), Comparing Cities | Professional Writing  Hometown Reaction |
| 4 | Cont. Professional Writing – Hedging Language  Academic Integrity & Citation | Summary – Plagiarism Prevention |
| 5 | Approach to Academic Writing – Research Paper topics  Describing Objects – Product Review | Illumin Summary-Evaluation  10 Questions – Research Paper |
| 6 | General-Specific Text  Compare and Contrast – App/ Website Reviews | Term Definitions  Descriptive Language |
| 7 | MIDTERM EXAM –  Compare and contrast - multiple sources | Two more summary-evaluations |
| 8 | Editing – Outline  Midterm Conferences | Annotated Bibliography  Detailed Outline - Revised |
| 9 | Problem-Solution Text | Rewrite PS paper |
| 10 | Data Commentary and infographics | 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 Reflection Memo | 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)