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

Section No.: 10165

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| Instructor: Eric H. Roth | Office: PSD 106E |
| Classroom: LVL 3B | Email: ericroth@usc.edu |
| Class time: 2:00-3:20 TuTh | Office Hours: TuTh 11:30-1:30  and by appointment |
| Midterm Exam: 10/3/2019 | Capstone Exam: 11/21/19 |
| **Semester Holidays:**  9/2, 10/17, 10/18, 11/27-11/29 | **Last Day of Class:**  12/3/2019 |

**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 academic and professional materials
* Deploy appropriate hedging and boosting language
* Recognize vocabulary denoting possibility, probability, and certainty
* Evaluate texts, support assertions, and write critiques
* Analyze complicated documents in terms of effectiveness & fairness
* Create a synthesis of several sources from diverse perspectives
* Choose an appropriate vocabulary that matches audience expectations
* Provide and receive constructive feedback to peers on written work,
* Edit, and revise written work for specific audiences
* Select an appropriate citation style (e.g., IEEE, APA, MLA)
* Write original research papers that meet USC academic standards

*“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, students (including you) will also be required to find both specialist articles from academic journals and non-specialist, general articles that specifically address issues related to a final research paper.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments are usually 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. It's easier to climb a mountain step by step.

**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 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 several in-class writing exercises during the semester. Some exercises are rough first drafts; some are submitted for additional feedback. Writing often means revising, editing, and rewriting. Peer feedback (often with checklists) and instructor evaluation help students to see and better understand the strengths and weaknesses of student writings.

The quality of your ALI 255 writings (plus midterm portfolio, capstone writing exam, and the final research paper) will determine whether you will need additional writing 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 (100 points)  Other short writings (100 points) | 10%  10% |
| Reviews - Product & Film | 20% |
| Problem Solution (w/data commentary) | 10% |
| Annotated bibliography (100 points) | 10% |
| Midterm Exam (50 points) | 5% |
| Capstone Writing exam (50 points) | 5% |
| Final Research paper (300 points) | 30% |

**Exams**

ALI 255 exams focus, naturally, on academic writing skills. Students are required to pass the midterm and capstone writing exams with a score equivalent to 70% in order to receive credit for the course. An annotated bibliography will demonstrate the ability to summarize, paraphrase, and evaluate sources for a research paper. A midterm writing exam will review and document student progress. The last, capstone writing exam will require students to display academic writing skills documenting 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, Summaries, Annotated Bibliographies, Critical Reviews (books, products, restaurants, or movies), Data Commentary, Contrastive Essays, Term Definitions, Persuasive Essays, Process Descriptions, Literature Reviews, and other assignments.

**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.

*“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*

**Final Research Paper**

The final research paper serves as the capstone 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 micro-specialist 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.

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-term and long-term consequences, and examine a range of potential solutions. Finally, this type of paper would evaluate the solutions.

The final ALI 255 Research Paper must meet the following requirements:

* Approximately eight-ten 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 properly cited illustrations (e.g., table, graph, chart) with data commentary
* Two or more direct quotations
* A minimum of 10 appropriate sources (half preferably peer-reviewed journals)
* Documentation of sources using the style in your field (APA, MLA)
* “References/Works Cited” page at the end of your essay where you list the sources you used in your paper (not counted towards the eight-page minimum)
* An annotated bibliography of five sources (each one page and not counted toward the seven-page minimum).
* Revised biostatement

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.

The final ALI 255 research 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 same final paper to Turnitin via Blackboard.

**CONFERENCES:** We will meet at least three times individually this semester to discuss your progress in your academic writing skills. These student-professor meetings, often 15-20 minute 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 255 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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC upholds high standards of academic integrity. ALI, in keeping with these university standards, has to ensure that international students, often new to the American university system 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. 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 familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

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?

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

Sometimes we all need help. USC provides a wide range of support systems.

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710 studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101 diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Use of Technology**

Our class meets in the Spring of 2019. 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 behavior can be uncomfortable to others in the class and undercuts the purpose of being in an English class. Please use English in our English classroom. Okay?

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 respectfully 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 2019 ALI 255 Course Schedule\***

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| **WEEK** | **TASK** | **HOMEWORK** |
| 1 | Why study writing in English?  Diagnostic Exam  Introductions – Casual and Formal | Vocabulary Review  Write Reaction (Hometown) Essay – Unit 11, 1 |
| 2 | Course Overview –  Biostatements – resumes  Peer Review – Hometown Summary | Rewrite biostatement/resume  Summarize resume article  Comparing Cities |
| 3 | Professional Writing – Round 2 (Bio Statements, Resume, Cover Letter, Email),  Good mistakes in professional communication | Revise Professional Writing  50 Steps - Units 3-6  Email best practices |
| 4 | Hedging Language -  Academic Integrity & Citation | Illumin - Two Summaries  Plagiarism Prevention |
| 5 | Approach to Academic Writing  Research Paper topics  Describing Objects – Product Review | Illumin Summary-Evaluation  10 Questions – Research Paper |
| 6 | Midterm Writing. General-Specific Text  Compare and Contrast – Consumer Reviews | Term Definitions  Yelp/Amazon reviews |
| 7 | Compare and contrast – citing multiple sources  Product reviews | Two more summary-evaluations |
| 8 | Editing – Outline  Midterm Conferences | Annotated Bibliography  Detailed Outline - Revised |
| 9 | Problem-Solution Text  Review best practices – persuasive writing | Rewrite PS paper  Units 36-48 |
| 10 | Data Commentary and infographics  Graphs, maps, charts, & other infographics | Data commentaries  Units 40- 44 |
| 11 | Unit 6: Critiques and Reviews  Write Film review | Blog post - Movie  First draft – Final Paper |
| 12 | Writing Workshop – Abstracts & keywords  Grammar review – overcoming good mistakes | Revising First Draft Paper  Study for Capstone Writing |
| 13 | Capstone Writing exam | 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. Proficiency in English. USC Graduate Admissions: International Students. Retrieved on Oct. 18, 2012, from http://www.usc.edu/admission/graduate/international/english.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quotes on Writing. Quotefreaks. Retrieved on January 6, 2013 from http://quotefreaks.com/quotes-on-artists/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)