Writing 111

There is creative reading as well as creative writing.  
--Ralph Waldo Emerson

The desire to write grows with writing.  
--Erasmus

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.  
--Francis Bacon

Introduction
This course is a beginning. It is a bracing reintroduction. It is an eclectic intellectual adventure.

A beginning. Some may balk at the suggestion that we are “beginning” to study a skill and subject that they have honed and explored already for many years by now, but that is exactly what we will be doing in this semester. And for good reason. Writing is a craft; and like all crafts—woodworking, playing a musical instrument, putting—it takes time and practice to become accomplished. The stakes are high that you come out of college with excellent writing skills. To write well is to think well: nothing puts your “noodle” on display more than your writing. This class, then, is a kind of “beginning” to the next stage of your development as a thinker, reader, and writer.

A reintroduction. You will be learning and relearning some basic elements of grammar, structure, and style in this course—dreary tasks, perhaps, but essential just the same—and you will be “reintroduced” to writing as an essential tool, not only for you as successful college students in an academic setting (which is reason enough to work hard to improve it), but as successful employees and citizens later in life. You know a lot already. Now you will build on what you know and learn how to apply that knowledge in new contexts. The reorientation of your thinking about writing may for some be rather bracing, but go with it! This should be one
class (of a great many you take at Westminster) that you will look back on years from now and be able to count the positive things you took from it. That’s my pledge to you.

**An adventure.** Writing and reading are linked skills. You will be writing about things we read and discuss in class, and I have chosen a wide range of scholarly and literary works that are themselves important to read and digest, as well as wonderful launching pads for writing. This is a course about skills, but skills cannot be learned outside of a context. My hope is that we can greatly improve your writing and thinking skills and, along the way, provide you with some important readings to munch on. It’s an eclectic set of readings we have for this class: short stories; literary essays; works of history, math, and musicology; a Shakespearean sonnet. While we will have a blinkered focus on your writing skills, we will also read classic and timely readings from most of the disciplines (majors and minors) offered at Westminster College. You will gain skills in this class, and set off on an intellectual “adventure.” I pledge that to you, too.

I cannot, however, pledge that this class will by itself turn you into an accomplished writer. Writing is a process, one you began years ago as you first learned to put pencil to paper. This class is one more stage in your development as an effective writer, sensitive reader, and critical thinker. The advances you make in this course must be carried into your other classes over the next three years (and beyond graduation). Thinking of your writing in the way, for example, a student of the piano thinks of her or his playing is useful here: you will never stop improving, so long as you practice, practice, practice.

**Student Outcomes**

On the **stratospheric level**, this course seeks to make you better

- writers,
- readers, and
- critical thinkers,

but what does that mean practically?

**Very specifically,** students will be able to:

1. **identify** the key **arguments** in assigned readings;
2. **generate** appropriate and probing **theses** for their papers (based on readings and discussions);
3. **identify** and **design** organizational **structures** for their papers that are appropriate to their arguments and effective rhetorically;
4. **demonstrate** a facility with **research tools** and finding aids;
5. **demonstrate** a basic but working knowledge of the various conventions for **citing sources**;
6. **demonstrate** the ability to **revise** their drafts in line with recommendations from the instructor and peers;

and, on an affective level,
7. experience and appreciate the genuine thrill that comes from generating a piece of good writing, and be instilled with the desire to keep on writing throughout their lives (admittedly, outcomes that can only be assessed years down the road)!

**Texts**


This is an excellent and handy reference manual for a range of relevant topics to be treated in this class—from grammar, style, and punctuation, to the various systems of source citation. You will not “read” all of it, but it will be an indispensable aid to you in this course.

Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say, I say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*

This is a first for me. I have not used this book before but am convinced it can help us move you forward as writers. Bear with me as I explore the best ways to use it.

In addition, there will be other short readings (for the list of most of them, see below: “Preliminary Course Schedule”). These readings will be the ones we discuss and, for the most part, use for writing assignments. Whenever possible, I will distribute these readings to you by email or by hand, or placed them on the D2L course page.

It is required and essential that you do the readings when assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them.

**Grading**

1. The final grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:

   Three short papers  
   15% (5% each)

   Three long papers  
   60% (10%, 20%, 30%)

   Citation conventions quizzes  
   15% (3 quizzes, 5% each)

   Participation:  
   10%

2. Grades will be assigned according to the follow numerical equivalencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B.....Etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grading Rubrics
All writing assignments will be graded according to the following rubric:

1. *Argumentation* (50%). How lucidly do you make your arguments? Do you have a thesis statement? How relevant or substantial is your thesis? How well do you draw on sources? How convincing are your arguments?

2. *Style and Organization* (25%). Do you have an appropriate introduction, paragraphs, topic sentences, transitions, and conclusion? How persuasive and convincing is your use of language?

3. *Mechanics* (15%). How grammatical is your prose? How correct is your spelling and punctuation? Has your paper been submitted on time and both in paper and electronic versions?

4. *Format* (10%). Do your references to sources conform to the appropriate citation conventions? Does your paper conform to the course’s own format requirements (enumerated below)?

For the take-home exam, please follow assiduously the format requirements enumerated below:

1. Type your papers.
2. Double space your main text.
3. Single space footnotes, but double space between them; and if you are using endnotes, double-space them throughout.
4. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or subheadings.
5. Use reasonable margins and headers/footers: 1.25” all around.
6. Do not use a title page, but always have a title.
7. Begin page 1 at the top of the first page (not mid page). Place your title at the very top of page 1, with the main body of the text beginning 3 lines below it.
8. After your title, your first paragraph should NOT be indented. All others, of course, should be. If you use subheadings in the main body of the text (e.g., “Introduction”, “Section 1”, “Conclusion”—these are rare in student papers but do sometimes appear), then the paragraph beginning immediately after a subheading is NOT indented.
9. Always paginate (you may omit for page 1).
10. Use only black ink for all your text, including hyperlinks that might appear in your main text, foot- or endnotes, or bibliographies (hyperlinks often print out in blue ink; it is advisable to deactivate all hyperlinks in your papers as a matter of course).
11. Pay scrupulous attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation, which do “count.”
12. Use the appropriate citation convention (MLA, APA, Chicago) correctly and consistently.
13. Label your submissions as following: name, date, course and number, description of the assignment (e.g., “Assignment 1” for the first assignment).
14. Type or legibly write this information on the outermost page of the paper after having folded it (fold to the left), approximately 3 inches from the top of the page.
15. Always staple your pages together.
16. Always be mindful of the appearance of your submitted work. A bad printer or low ink cartridge (and therefore poor-quality print) is not acceptable.
17. All written assignments must be submitted in hardcopy by the announced due date and simultaneously posted to the “Submit” sub-subfolder of the “Assignments” subfolder of
the course folder on the R: drive. When doing so, please name your file with your last name followed by the number of the assignment (without a space), e.g.: Martin1, Martin2, etc. (If there are two students with the same last name, add initials of first and middle names, again without spaces: REMartin1, REMartin2, etc.).

18. Proofread. Then proofread again.

19. Be advised that late papers are penalized in ruthless Soviet fashion: a one-third reduction in the grade of the paper for each day late (including weekends), beginning at the conclusion of the class during which the assignment was due. An “A” paper turned in one day late will receive an “A-,” two days late, a “B+,” three, a “B,” and so on.

**Academic Integrity**

The 2017–2018 Undergraduate Catalog (pp. 65–69; quote at p. 65) provides the following definition for “academic integrity”:

> Central to the purpose and pursuit of any academic community is academic integrity. All members of the Westminster community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity, in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the College.

Academic dishonesty is a profound violation of this code of behavior.

For a course like this one, the major concern about “academic dishonesty” is plagiarism, partly because it remains, alas, fairly commonplace on college campuses, partly because what constitutes plagiarism is often unclear in the minds of students. Plagiarism is described in some detail in the Undergraduate Catalog on pp. 66–67. For the sake of clarity, plagiarism can be defined as generally leading your reader (or in the case of oral presentations, listeners) to believe that what you have written or said is your own work when, in fact, it is not. Plagiarism runs from the rather mild to the totally flagrant. It can be the word-for-word reproduction of another person’s text without quotation marks and appropriate citation. It can be a paraphrase that is far too close to the source text to constitute “being in your own words.” And it can be even the unattributed borrowing of apt phrases or terminology. All of these degrees of plagiarism are equally unethical and may be penalized with failure for the assignment, or, in extreme cases, failure for the course.

*If you are ever in doubt as to whether your written work is plagiaristic in form, do not hesitate to consult with the professor.*

And please be informed that the take-home exam in this course may be submitted to turnitin.com, a licensed service to which the College has a subscription to help faculty identify papers that contain plagiaristic material.

**Statement on the Use of Communications Technology in the Classroom**

The use of all cell phones, smart phones, pagers, iPods, iPads, or any other internet-accessible technology is **expressly prohibited** during class unless part of an in-class assignment or activity. All students are required to turn off or silence their phones and to stow them out of reach and out
of sight for the duration of the class and during in-class examinations. Violation of this policy may be considered a breach of the academic integrity policy of the College.

**On Notifications**
If you are going to miss a scheduled exam or quiz, please notify the professor in advance to obtain permission to reschedule (in the case of exams) or to be excused (in the case of quizzes). Failure to do so will mean that the exam may not be permitted to be rescheduled and that the grade for the missed quiz will be a zero. Permissions are not automatically granted, even when advanced notice is given. All absences at times of exams and quizzes must be documented with a legal excuse and for reasons permitted by College policy (as stated in the Undergraduate Catalog).

**On Citation Styles**
Most students at Westminster College have been taught MLA citation conventions. These are good to know generally, but are not always appropriate for use in history courses. It is the usual (though not universal) custom in the historical profession to use the Chicago Manual of Style (or CMS, currently in its 16th edition). This is the method that makes use of footnotes or endnotes (which you use is entirely up to you), in preference to in-text or parenthetical references. Students will be required to master CMS sufficiently well enough to write their second (take-home) midterms. While more complex than MLA, it is not difficult to learn or use. McGill also has a copy of the CMS (14th through 16th editions—for our purposes, it doesn’t matter which you consult). Students are encouraged, of course, to seek out the professor's advice in any especially problematic cases.

**Copyright of Lectures and Course Materials**
All federal and state copyrights to my lectures and course materials of my own generation are reserved by the professor.

You are authorized to take notes in class for your own personal use and for no other purpose. You are not authorized to make any recording of my lectures without the professor’s written permission. You are not authorized to make any commercial use of the professor’s course materials or to provide them to anyone else other than students currently enrolled in this course without the professor’s written permission.

**Accessibility Statement**
Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Resources, at 209 Thompson-Clark Hall; 724-946-7192; craigfa@westminster.edu. See the 2017–2018 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 27 for details. See also here: https://my.westminster.edu/ics/Campus_Life/Campus_Groups/Disability_Resources/.
I am very willing and eager to meet the instructional needs of any and all of my students. Please see me privately if you have any special needs, concerns, or questions that pertain to your performance in this class.

Statement on a Safe Learning Environment
(Adapted from the statement at use at Santa Clara Univ.)
Westminster College operates under a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and assault. If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, harassment, or sexual assault, including domestic or dating violence or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. Feel free always to report the incident to me, though know that I am obligated to report all incidences to the College. The College’s EEO and Title IX coordinator is Kimberlee Christofferson, who can be reached at 724-946-7247 or at christkk@westminster.edu. I am determined to make sure that this class and this classroom setting are safe learning spaces for you.
Preliminary Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to modification, as the needs of the students or professor may require.

Week I.
January 16: What are you going to get out of this class?
January 18: Trial Balloon. Read this, write about this.
Read: Read this syllabus;

Week II.
January 23: Grammar Excursus
Read: Hacker and Sommers, 1–18.
January 25: Writing about what you know; writing about “yourself” and through yourself
Read: “Prologue” in Stephen Greenblatt’s Hamlet in Purgatory, 3-9;
    Shakespeare, Sonnet 138.
Assignment: Short paper 1 draft due today

Week III.
January 30: Discussion: Revising and Writing
February 1: Grammar Excursus
Assignment: Revised short paper 1 due today

Week IV.
February 6: Grammar Excursus
Read: Hacker and Sommers, 54–75; “Why Read the Great Nineteenth-Century Historians” in John Clive’s Not By Fact Alone, 34–47
February 8: In Focus: The Introduction
Assignment: Short paper 2 due today

Week V.
February 13: Grammar Excursus
Read: Hacker and Sommers, 76–87; Joan Didion, “Why I Write.”
February 15: In Focus: Paragraphs
Assignment: Short paper 3 due today
Week VI.
February 20: Academic Writing Mechanics
   Read: Graff and Birkenstein, 1–14.
February 22: In Focus: Bodies and Body Parts
   Read: “I think I’ll stop here” in Simon Singh, Fermat’s Last Theorem, 1–35.

Week VII.
February 27: Academic Writing Mechanics
   Read: Graff and Birkenstein, 17–51; Selections from Pinker, The Language Instinct.
March 1: In Focus: Conclusions

Week VIII.
March 5, 7, 9: No Class: SPRING BREAK

Week IX.
March 13: Citing Sources
   Read: From Grafton, The Footnote (selection)
March 15: Chicago Manual of Style
   Read: Hacker and Sommers, 235–75 (skim)
Assignment: Long paper 1 due today

Week X.
March 20: MLA
March 22: APA
   Read: Hacker and Sommers, 178–234 (skim)

Week XI.
March 27: Citation Quiz
March 29: No Class: EASTER BREAK

Week XII.
April 3 (Tuesday): No Class: Monday Classes Meet!
April 5: Perils of Plagiarism

Week XIII.
April 10: Academic Writing Mechanics
   Read: Graff and Birkenstein, 53–100.
April 12: In Focus: Argumentation
Assignment: Long paper 2 due today
Week XIV.

April 17: Academic Writing Mechanics
   Read: Graff and Birkenstein, 103–159.
April 19: In Focus: Revising
   Read: Wex, “Born to Kvetch”

Week XV.

April 24: Academic Writing Mechanics
   Read: Graff and Birkenstein, 163–172, 184–238 (but selected by major)
April 26: Importing all this into your major
   Read: “The Rest is Noise”

Week XVI.

May 1: The Oral Text
   Watch: Video
May 3: Assessing the Unassessable

Finals Period: Long paper 3 due today