Instructor Information

Instructor: Luke Alvin
Office Location: 149 Walker
E-mail: lalvin@mtu.edu
Office Hours: MWF 12:00am – 1:00pm or by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: UN 2001-R07
Course Name: Composition
Course Location: 144 Walker
Class Times: MWF 11:05am – 11:55am

Course Description/Overview

"UN 2001 (also known as 'Composition: Written, Oral and Visual' is a sophomore-level writing and communications course. Students learn to apply rhetorical principles to compose effective, supported arguments in written, oral, and visual modes." (Description from MTU graduate handbook). For this spring, we will be taking the principles of "rhetoric" (a term you will hear plenty about this semester!) and learn how to apply them towards improving your communication skills within your major and also within workplace and business settings.

Course Resources

Course Website

- Blackboard [http://www.courses.mtu.edu](http://www.courses.mtu.edu). Blackboard will be my primary way of providing info to you, so please get into the habit of checking it.
- You will not have to purchase any textbooks for this course.
**Grading Scheme**

**Grading System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% - 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% - 86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% - 81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% - 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I’ll always round up to the nearest whole point in the case of fractions.

**Grading Policy**

Grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual/Audio Project</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Projects</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Auto)biography</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Late Assignments**

Work is due at the start of class on the day that it is due. For each day that work is turned in late, it will be lowered a letter grade. Work turned in five days or later will receive a zero. If, for some reason, you know that you cannot meet a deadline, please talk to me in advance, and I may be able to work with you. I understand that issues (both in other classes and in your personal lives) can arise, and I am fairly flexible about working with you on due dates. With that being said, you will be expected to complete all your work, even if we do arrange for an extension. Also, you have to talk to me in advance about asking for an extension—don’t just email me the night before something is due. Talk to me at least three days (preferably more) before the due date and I may be able to help you out.
Course Policies

A note on respect in the classroom: In this class we will be sharing our thoughts and opinions on issues that can sometimes become heated and we might have disagreements. Regardless of whether or not you agree with someone, it is expected that you remain polite and respectful. Rude, hostile, and intolerant behavior will not be tolerated and could result in me asking you to leave class, resulting in an unexcused absence.

Attendance policy: In this section of UN 2001, we are going to create and work on several projects in class, often in groups. These projects represent 10% of your total grade. If you miss an in-class assignment, you will get no credit for that day. Likewise, we will be having many discussions and other in-class activities which are important to attend. Thus, excessive (more than three) unexcused absences this semester will drop your grade by a letter for each additional absence you miss. If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please talk to me and we may be able to make arrangements.

Cell phones: I don’t care if you bring your phones to class. All I ask is that you put them on vibrate or silence at the start of class and that you are not texting, playing games, or doing anything disruptive with your phone during our class.

Plagiarism/Academic Expectations

According to MTU plagiarism is "knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation." Likewise, "reusing" a paper from a different course, copying, cheating, etc are all violations of MTU’s academic integrity code. If you violate MTU’s academic integrity code, I will refer you to the appropriate channels.

I’ll let you in on my experience with people who decide to cheat, copy, reuse papers, find a website to write a paper for them, etc—they are really hurting themselves. Maybe they get away with it once or twice, but the risk is huge. If you decide to cheat, you run the very real risk of getting in serious trouble at Michigan Tech. ITS NOT WORTH IT!!!! If you feel overwhelmed and the only way you can get your paper done is to cheat, please talk to me and I will be happy to work and help you on your paper/project outside of class.

University Policies

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Technological University complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, Chair/Dean of your academic unit, or the Affirmative Programs Office at 487-3310.
Here is the real deal: if you have a disability or any issue that may have an impact on your class performance—please talk to me before or after class (or during my office hours) and I will be more than happy to work with you. You don’t have to bring in a doctor’s slip or anything—just be honest with me. I want you to do well not only in this class but in your other classes, so please let me know how I can help you.

Academic Integrity:
http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Affirmative Action:
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aoa/

Disability Services:
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/dos/disability.htm


Class Schedule

Week One—Introducing the Class

Monday January 9:

Wednesday January 11:
Hand out syllabus to anyone who missed class on Monday. In-class introductions.

Friday January 13:
Discussion on why we read and write? Read the short NY Times article, “Why We Read”. Also consider your favorite books…and your least favorite. Why do we sometimes like one book over another? Be ready for discussion.
**Week Two—Using Language to Create Identity**

*Monday January 16:*

No class for Martin Luther King Jr. Day!

*Wednesday January 18:*

Luke’s birthday! In-class exercise of writing “I Am.....” poems. What are your thoughts on poetry? How can it be used to express things differently from “normal” writing? What are some limitations with poetry?

*Friday 20 January:*

Narration, memoirs, and (auto)biographies. What is a memoir or a biography? Why do we read them? Who writes them? Why are they important?

**Week Three—Conferences**

*Monday January 23:*

Share our biographies/introductions with the class. Consider the role that audience plays in how your wrote your biographies....would you have changed how you wrote if you knew your mother or future employer would be in class? What about someone you really dislike (an ex for example)...would you want them hearing about your personal life? Finally--Sign up for one-on-one conferences with me (Luke).

*Wednesday January 25:*

First round of conferences with me (Luke). See section entitled “Conferences” for more details.

*Friday January 27:*

Second round of conferences with me (Luke). See section entitled “Conferences” for more details.
Week Four—Introducing Scholastic/Academic Writing and Conventions

Monday January 30:

Why and how do we read and write in school? Seems obvious, but let’s look into things further—what do you expect when you read something for a class (think language, grammar, citations, etc)? How do you feel you need to write when you are in school? What’s appropriate and what is not. Look at short story “Visiting Lambeau” and compare the different versions.

Wednesday February 1:

The rhetorical triangle. *Ethos, pathos, and logos.*

Friday February 3:

Introduce portfolio. Compare various business letterheads. Consider how we can design our own letterhead for the portfolio.

**HOMEWORK:** Design a letterhead for your portfolio. DUE MONDAY. See “portfolio” section for more details.

Week Five—Winter Carnival!

Monday February 6:

Emails—both in school and in the workplace. Consider the difference between “informal” vs. “formal” emails. Think of the importance/role of audience in crafting emails. Letterhead due at the start of class.

Wednesday February 8:

No class because of Winter Carnival!!

Friday February 10:

No class because of Winter Carnival!!
**Week Six—Technical Communication**

*Monday February 13:*

What is technical communication? Why is technical communication important in the workplace?

*Wednesday February 15:*

Sharing and examining technical data—looking at blueprints, maps, schematics, etc. How is “reading” technical data different from “reading” a novel? Where do our textbooks fit into things?

*Friday February 17:*

In-class technical writing exercise (see under section entitled “In-Class Projects” for more details). PLEASE BRING A COMPUTER TO CLASS. If you don’t finish in class, you will have to finish up over the weekend.

**Week 7—Writing in STEM fields**

*Monday February 20:*

How is writing in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field different from writing in a different discipline? How is information shared within STEM fields?

*Wednesday February 22:*

Writing in engineering fields—for this day we will look at various publications related to engineering and also look at the writing/communication process that occurs in engineering fields. Just because you aren’t studying engineering doesn’t mean that there are not similarities with your own discipline!

*Friday February 24:*

Writing in Natural Resources—this day will be similar to our studying of writing/communication in engineering fields. However, reflect on the role that the public plays on a public, government agency (such as the MI DNR)—think about the variety of publications that such an agency is tasked with creating.
Week 8—Writing in STEM fields continued

Monday February 27:

Writing and communicating in computer science fields—in what ways do having separate programming languages (C++, Java, etc) make communicating in CS fields different from other fields? Why is the human aspect important in user interface and website design?

Wednesday February 29:

Writing and presenting information in mathematical fields—especially statistics. How can statistics be helpful? How can they be manipulated? Why do we even bother to use statistics?

Friday March 2:

NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK! Be safe and have a great break!!!

Week 9—NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Week 10—Business Writing and Communication

Monday March 12:

Resumes, interviews, and cover letters. How do we write/craft resumes and cover letters? What are they? How do we prepare for interviews? How are our non-verbal communication choices (clothing, hair, shoes, body-language, etc) an important part in interviews? Why must we remember our audience and their expectations?

Wednesday March 14:

In-class group project: “Someones gotta go!” (see “in-class project” section for more details). What you do not get done in class, you will have to finish up outside of class.
Friday March 16:

Share our decisions from the “Someones gotta go!” project. Why were some of our decisions the same? Why were some different? How does this apply in the “real world” or when we go for job interviews or when we are in the workplace?

Week 11—Communication in Ethical Situations

Monday March 19:

The ethics of language and communication. How can someone use rhetoric and language to influence people to do horrible things (think of Hitler or the genocide in Rwanda for example)? Why is it important that we look at things with a critical eye?

Wednesday March 21:

In-class project/discussion: “Dealing with a Problem at Work”. How can language and communication skills help diffuse potentially damaging and problematic situations in the workplace?

Friday March 23:

Discussion of “Dealing with a Problem at Work”. After our discussion: language, racism, sexism, and stereotypes. How can language be used as a means to oppress people? How can language be used to “liberate” people? Why is it important that we are aware of how language and communication can portray stereotypes in the workplace and in school?

Week 12—Marketing, Money, and Rhetorical Appeals

Monday March 26:

Advertisements and the rhetorical triangle. How do companies market products by appealing to peoples’ ethos, pathos, and logos? How do politicians?

Wednesday March 28:

The Occupy Wall Street Movement—what role do protest movements play in influencing policy? What are some problems with a movement such as Occupy Wall Street? What sort of language and appeals are made by protest movements? Why is it important to critically analyze both sides of movements and arguments?
Friday March 30:

Music videos and rhetorical appeals. In what ways are music and sounds used to help appeal towards people? How is this another manifestation of communication skills and language?

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Week 13—PowerPoints and Conferences

Monday April 2:

PowerPoint presentations—what makes a good PowerPoint...what makes a poor PowerPoint? Think of the importance of color, font, and all the elements of design with creating PowerPoints. Also—sign up for end-of-semester conferences.

Wednesday April 4:

First round of conferences with me (Luke).

Friday April 6:

Second round of conferences with me (Luke).

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Week 14—End of the Semester Wrap-Up

Monday April 9:

Show the final electronic portfolio—field any questions, make sure everyone is aware of what is required.

Wednesday April 11:

Optional in-class workshop on how to create the electronic portfolios. If you chose to come to class, please bring a computer with your files on it so you can follow along and load your documents.
Friday April 13:

No class—(I) Luke will be in his office during office hours, stop by if you have any questions. Otherwise, have a great summer break!!

Electronic Portfolio Due by 6:00 PM on Monday April 15th

Assignments

In-Class Projects (10% of your total grade):

During the semester we will be doing four in-class group projects. Below I am providing you an overview of what the projects will look like, however on the days that we will be doing the projects, I will give you a much more detailed set of instructions. I (Luke) have set aside class time so you can complete these projects because I know how difficult it can be to work on projects outside of class. It is important that you are in class for these days so that you can receive all the points for project. Pretty much as long as you are in class and you participate, you will receive all the points for these projects.

First In-Class Project: “I Am....” Poems. January 18

For this project (which actually is not a group project) you will be writing an “I Am....” poem. The purpose of this exercise is to explore a form of writing that is much different from any of the other types/styles of writing we will be doing this semester—poetry. Not only is it interesting to explore how poetry differs from scientific or technical writing but this exercise will also help you brainstorm for your first out-of-class homework—writing an autobiography.

Second In-Class Project: “Technical Writing” February 17

During this part of the semester we will be learning about different forms of “Technical Writing”—which is an important element in scientific and business communication. In order to help build our understanding of technical writing, we will be getting into groups of four and writing a “how to” set of instructions on a program (such as how to insert a graph in Microsoft Excel) that we can share with the class. Think about how language changes in writing instructions....also think about directions that are really confusing or hard to follow. Why does this happen? How can we improve on such problems?
Third In-Class Project: “Someones Gotta Go” March 14

At this stage of the semester, we will be looking at various “real-world” sorts of writings that can occur. While it may feel like school will never end, before long many of you will be working in business and industry. An important component of the workplace is decided who to hire and who to fire. In this exercise, you will be in a group with three other people and you have to make a decision on firing one of three employees (who come from a sheet I, Luke, will hand out to you). There are no wrong answers in terms of who you decide to fire. After your group makes a decision, you will have to write a short memo to Human Resources (HR) explaining why you choose to fire the person. Consider how you use language in writing to HR. You also will have to write a memo to the person who is getting fired and explain to them that they are being terminated. Consider how the language you use in this memo differs from the language you used in writing to HR. What role does audience play in how we write? Why is it important to apply the principles of rhetoric in writing business memos?

Fourth In-Class Project: “Dealing with a Problem at Work” March 21

Anyone who has spent time in the workplace knows that sometimes there can be conflicts that arise between people. Sometimes these conflicts can be over politics or religion….or sometimes they can occur just because two people don’t get along. For this project, you and three other people are going to read about a complaint that has been filed by someone in your workplace regarding a holiday celebration that they viewed as offensive. Your group will have to discuss the problem and then type up a solution as if you were actually in the workplace. As you are completing this assignment, think back to the “Someones Gotta Go” project and the importance of audience. Why is it important to have tact when solving a problem like this? How can a clumsy or poorly-written response cause even more problems?

Our first assignment is to write an autobiography about yourself. You are free to write however you want (in poem form, in a narrative-story form, a fake obituary if you are feeling morbid, a fake dating advertisement, or any manner that you chose). I want you to feel free to explore your creativity with this assignment. Don’t worry if you try something and it doesn’t flow perfectly, I won’t downgrade you for attempting to be creative. Honestly, I am not going to have too much listed in terms of criteria, I really don’t want to make you feel like you have to follow a bunch of rules. The only thing that I will say is that your paper should be two (2) pages long. Basically just introduce yourself. We will be sharing our autobiographies in-class so think about what you may or may not want to include.
An important part of your academic career, and possibly your professional career depending on your field, is the ability to conduct and do research. However, just being able to research something is not enough; you also must possess the ability to share your research with others. Think from this angle—we’ve all had that teacher (for me it was always a math teacher) who was really smart but flat out could not communicate the material effectively. This problem doesn’t just happen in school settings but also can occur in workplaces. With many of you going into research-intense fields it is important to have both research and communication skills. This assignment is designed to help you develop both skill sets. I will give you a more detailed rubric and description of the assignment later on this semester. However, if you are looking for a head start, some of the things that I will be looking for are: 5-7 pages, preferably a topic that relates to your major, correct citations (this is really important!), and logical flow and organization. Like I said, don’t freak out about this paragraph not providing a complete description because I will be handing out a more detailed description and the grading rubric.

Communication is much more than just speaking or writing. Think about how music in a movie can create a feeling or how a statistical chart can present data. Also consider how colors, shapes, logos, and a host of other things impact how we perceive and view our world. For this assignment, you will have to create a project that appeals to peoples’ auditory and visual perceptions. I will provide the rubric and a more detailed description later in the semester. However, much like with the research paper, if you want to start thinking about your project, here are some things you may be interested in doing: using PowerPoint with a narration to explain your topic from your research paper, making a music video, using Audicity to make a radio advertisement, just to name a few suggestions.

**The Electronic Portfolio (15% of Your Total Grade) Due on April 15**

The electronic portfolio is a culmination of all your work throughout the semester. Besides writing a short (one page) reflective summary, all you have to do is submit your research paper, your autobiography, your audio/visual project. What this means is that it is important that you SAVE ALL YOUR WORK ELECTRONICALLY!!! I, Luke, will not be saving a copy of your work, so it is up to you to make sure that you have a copy of your work. To help you out, I will be creating folders for everyone in Blackboard where you have the option of uploading any documents you are worried about losing.

Also, a part of the portfolio is designing a letterhead. Don’t worry if you don’t know what exactly a letterhead is...or how to make one. We’ll be going over things in class, so basically as long as you have a computer (or access to one) you will be fine. If you are wondering what a letterhead is, just look at pretty much any letter you have received from MI Tech, and you will see an example of a letterhead on the paper.
For the portfolio, I will be showing how to upload your files and also provide more info throughout the semester.

**Conferences**

During the semester, we will be having conferences twice—once early in the semester (the third week of class) and once towards the end—week 13. The purpose of the conferences is to give you a chance to talk to me about any issues related to our course, what you think is important to study (specific types of writing in your field, citations, grammar, etc), and anything else you can think of that you may have questions about. Because we have a full class (20 students) we will be having the conferences over two days. You will sign up for a ten minute meeting time the class period before the start of conferences. You only have to come for the time that you signed up for, and once you are done, you are free to leave. If you miss the time that you sign up for, it will count as an unexcused absence so please show up!

*Round One (Week Three: January 25 and 27th)*

The first round of conferences is designed to give you a chance to talk to me one on one about what you are interested in studying in UN 2001. Because many of you come from different majors and have different expectations in school, these conferences can help me get a feeling of what you looking for with our course this semester. You also can let me know what are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Finally, feel free to bring up any other questions about school, professional writing, or anything else. These conferences are designed to help you.

*Round Two (Week 13 April 4 and 6th):*

The second round of conferences is a little bit different from the first round in that we will have completed some of our work. So, for these conferences you can bring in projects that you want to revise and you also can ask specific questions about things we have covered this semester. I also can provide suggestions on improving your writing and also some suggestions on the publications you may be required to create for your future major/career. Once again, I really want to help you so please bring any questions that you can think of to the conferences and I will do my best to assist you.