Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Maria Bergstrom, Instructor
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E-mail: mjbergst@mtu.edu
Office Hours: M & F 11 am-1 pm, W 11 am-noon, or by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: UN 1015
Course Name: Composition
Prerequisites: none

Course Description

In this course, students will examine and interpret communication practices and apply what they learn to their own written, spoken, and visual compositions. Students will learn to communicate in a variety of modes and to attend to audience, purpose, and context.

Course Overview

Composition (UN 1015) is a course designed to introduce you to college-level communication. We will begin the semester using the “This I Believe” program to write narratives that express a personal philosophy or belief. Using the personal narrative topic as a starting point, you will develop a proposal for a research project that will involve finding and consulting secondary sources and then developing a persuasive, well-reasoned, and well-supported written argument. Finally, you will produce a multi-modal project (visual, audio, or video in addition to writing) in the form of a Public Service Announcement related to your research project theme. You will present your finished project to the class as part of an oral presentation.

Throughout the semester, we will be considering how all modes of effective communication require us to pay attention to audience, context, and purpose. We will also focus on writing and composing as a process, not just an end point. As a class we will work through each stage: generating ideas, topic selection, library research, evaluating sources, framing an argument, drafting, seeking input from others, and revising. Because we learn best how to communicate effectively by practicing communication skills, the course will be writing-intensive and discussion-based.
Course Learning Objectives

Composition (UN 1015) is a foundational course in the University’s General Education program and directly addresses two of the University’s Student Learning Goals, namely:

Communication: Students will be able to communicate effectively, orally, in writing and in new media, to a wide variety of audiences, and

Information literacy: Students will be able to identify the need for information, procure and evaluate information, and subsequently revise their strategy for obtaining information. Students will access and apply information in an ethical and legal manner.

[copies of the University-wide rubrics for these two Student Learning Goals are available on our Canvas course site]

As a result of taking this course, students will:
1. Learn to analyze texts and images using rhetorical principles.
2. Learn to apply rhetorical principles to their own writing in a variety of contexts.
3. Learn to focus on writing or composing as a process, and will submit multiple revisions of all major assignments, taking advantage of opportunities for peer and instructor feedback.
4. Gain practice at evaluating secondary sources for usefulness and reliability. Students will learn to distinguish “strong” from “weak” sources.
5. Learn how to properly incorporate secondary sources into their own writing. Students will understand how to avoid plagiarism, use proper format for citations, and effectively use sources to support their own ideas.

Course Resources

Course Website

• Canvas: We will use the Canvas course site throughout the semester for communication, to complete various assignments, and to submit papers for grading. Please adjust your Canvas settings so that you can receive new announcements and any changes in the syllabus and assignments in a timely manner.

Class E-mail List

• I have also established a class e-mail list. This list will be only for the members of our section and should be used only for communications directly relevant to the course. Only your mtu.edu email can be included on this list, so please use your mtu address for all communication related to this class.

• A word about contacting the instructor: I check my email regularly, but not typically after 3 pm. DO NOT EXPECT that an email sent after 3 pm or late at night will be read before 8 am the next day.

Required Course Text

Alfano, C. L., & O’Brien, A. J. (2011). Envision: Writing and Researching Arguments (3rd. ed.). Boston: Longman. **This text is available through the University bookstore, or you may purchase it on
your own. There is a 4th edition coming out this fall, but we will use the 3rd edition now and for spring semester courses. You may need to look for a used book if supplies of the 3rd edition are limited.

University Resources

- The **Michigan Tech Multiliteracies Center** is a free resource for you as you work on your writing assignments. Coaches at the center can help you brainstorm ideas, refine your topic, and write and revise your drafts. Help is available on a walk-in basis, but an appointment is recommended. Check out their webpage at: [http://www.mtu.edu/humanities/resources/mtmc/](http://www.mtu.edu/humanities/resources/mtmc/)

- The **J. Robert Van Pelt and Opie Library** will be your source for a number of services related to this course. Get to know what they have to offer by taking one of the regularly scheduled tours *(At the end of the tour you will receive a ticket to bring to class as proof that you attended. I will give one extra credit participation point for taking the library tour).*

Course Assignments

As we begin each assignment, a separate Assignment Sheet will be posted on our Canvas site with specific details about the assignment requirements. Below is a brief summary of the graded assignments for the semester.

**“This I Believe” Personal Essay:**
(20% of total grade)
This assignment has three major parts, and each part will contribute toward your overall grade. First, you will write a 200-250 word personal credo in which you describe one belief you hold that will form the basis for your essay. Then, you will expand your credo to a 3-5 page paper, using personal anecdote and other specific detail to make a compelling statement of your belief (you will turn in both a draft and a revision of this essay). Finally, you will make additional revisions to craft your paper into a 350-500 word essay that fits the requirements of the “This I Believe” website. Students will not be required to submit their essays to the “This I Believe” website, but that will be an option for those who wish.

**Research Project:**
(40% of total grade)
The research project forms the core of the graded assignments for this course. Using your “This I Believe” essay as a starting point, you will propose a topic for further study. You will develop a persuasive, researched argument that uses high-quality, relevant secondary sources to support your assertions. This project will also be completed in several parts. First, you will submit a research proposal outlining your topic, what position you will take, and how you will support your argument. Then, you will create an annotated bibliography (a list of relevant, scholarly sources along with written analysis of each one describing how it adds to the credibility of your argument as well as how you will use it in your project). I will ask you to keep a research log as you search for secondary sources and turn that in along with the bibliography. Finally, you will submit a written draft and revision of your research project (approximately 6-8 pages).

**Multi-modal Project:**
(15% of total grade)
Taking as your topic some aspect of your Research Project, develop a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for print, radio, television, or some other media context (your choice). You will be asked to
submit a preliminary proposal for your PSA for my approval. When you turn in your PSA, you will also submit a written document explaining the project, including a description of the imagined audience for your PSA and the rhetorical choices you made in creating it. You will also present your PSA to the class in a 5-10 minute oral presentation at the end of the semester.

**Final Portfolio:**
(10% of total grade)
The final portfolio will include your “This I Believe” essay, your research project, your multi-modal project, and your reflections on what you learned in the course, including some discussion of the rhetorical choices you made in composing and revising your assignments. If you choose, you can revise one of the writing assignments again before including it in the portfolio and indicate that you would like me to re-grade it. If I see significant improvement, I will revise the original grade on that assignment.

**Attendance/Participation:**
(15% of total grade)
Nearly every class session we will have some kind of assignment--a response to the reading, a question for discussion, a peer review of a paper, etc. Some of these will be written and/or turned in during class, some may be online submissions through our Canvas site. All “daily writings” will be graded on a pass/fail basis and will count towards the Participation part of the final grade.

**Grading Scheme**

**Grading System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% – 91%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% – 87%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>78% – 79%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% – 77%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>68% – 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% – 67%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student’s control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up by the close of the next semester or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Grading Policy
Grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“This I Believe” Personal Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-modal Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance/participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missed/Late Assignments
NO CREDIT will be given for missed/late assignments. Plan ahead and complete your assignments on time.

Course Policies

Classroom Expectations:
We have the luxury in this course of a small class size and the opportunity for a great deal of interaction. The nature of the course requires that everyone is actively participating. Therefore, electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc.) should be turned off and stowed away during class. I will also ask you to put away your computer except on those days when we are discussing material that I have given to you electronically. Technology can be a temptation to distraction for all of us. Resist the urge to check your email or Facebook for the 50 minutes we are together. You will get out of this course what you put into it. Don’t cheat yourself or your classmates by skipping class or detracting from our discussions.

Attendance:

Come to class, and come prepared to participate. All class activities contribute to your grade. If you are absent, you miss the activities for that day, and lose the opportunity to participate in the peer review and collaborative process. Attendance is part of your overall participation grade. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.

Plagiarism Rules
From the University’s Academic Integrity Policy:

Plagiarism is: “Knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation. This includes but is not limited to reading or hearing another's work or ideas and using them as one's own; quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another's work without giving proper credit; purchasing or receiving another's work and using, handling, or submitting it as one's own work.”

The University also considers it academic dishonesty to “knowingly or recklessly allow or help another individual to plagiarize, cheat, or fabricate information.”

We will spend a great deal of time in this course to understand the proper way to cite, quote, and incorporate outside sources in your own writing. The core of your written work, however, must be your own ideas and opinions. I urge you to take the risk of making a few mistakes rather than risk your
academic career by resorting to plagiarism. **Any student who cheats, plagiarizes, or appropriates text from the internet or any other source without citation will fail this course.**

As a class, we will be using turnitin.com as a means of screening submitted essays for plagiarism and incorrect use of secondary sources. Much more information about the logistics of this will be in your individual assignment sheets.

**University Policies**

Student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.

Michigan Tech has standard policies on academic misconduct and complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information about reasonable accommodation for or equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at **(906) 487-2212** or go to http://www.mtu.edu/provost/faculty-resources/syllabus-policies/