



Academic Writing Module
The Art of Substantive Writing: Developing Better Writers

Course Teacher: Muhammad Alashtar (PhD) Philosophy of Education – Critical Thinking and Pedagogy	Office: Dept. of English- College of Arts
Office Hours: A wall-mounted sheet in my office indicates the hours of my availability for any queries and/or questions. Please sign up individually Course code on the course sites platform: MAW201 Credits: 2 Class code on google classroom wht4it8	E-mail: dr.muhalashtar@gmail.com Website: https://sites.google.com/site/drphilmuhammadalashhtar/home/home Course Site https://new.coursesites.com/index.html#thankyou-instructor (signup for the course upon receiving the invitation note) Google Classroom https://classroom.google.com/c/MjIzNDY1Mzc3NzNa
	Facebook: basracritical thinkinggroup Mobile app: Google classroom (please download)

Course Syllabus

This triple module outlines the major requirements, expectations, and policies made for this course. Read the following THREE parts well and refer to them continuously

Part I: Basic Course Information

LOCATION: Department of English, Faculty of Arts at Basra University (BU) – 61004 Basra, Bab al-Zubair College Campus- Iraq.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The focus of the course is to inculcate a culture of writing in your minds by developing your abilities to think, organize and express your ideas clearly and effectively in a more debatable manner. This intensive course enhances your writing skills ground up, and it prepares better thinkers, well-trained questioners, and efficient writers via critical thinking vehicle.

In short, this instructional program intends to teach you how to learn to think critically by examining the logic behind writing. In order for the students to arrive at deliberate, skillful and substantive writing, they should learn the theory behind this process so as to bring their writing abilities to a higher level.

Towards this end, a two-semester teaching program is designed to adequately address this course objective. In the first semester, emphasis is placed on the basics of writing from paragraph to essay and on the various forms of expository writing such as descriptive and process writing, opinion paragraphs,

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comparison/contrast paragraphs, and problem/solution paragraphs. Through drafting, revising, and proofreading your papers and your peers, you will construct well-supported essays on a variety of topics.

In the second semester, the focus of the course is teaching students the ability to reflect, with reason and empathy, on the fundamentals of generating essays, and on the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the building blocks of writing, and producing strong essays in a more elegant style.

STUDENTS' LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course, you will be able to

1. Beforehand, students are to understand that the first step in the writing process is how to think and generate a map of knowledge. In other words, writing is to be conceived as a form of thinking and is grounded in inquiry; and hence it has a logical structure;
2. understand and engage in writing as a process – prewriting, drafting, revising, and proofreading in a clear written English;
3. develop different forms of paragraphs and a topic sentence clear to your readers;
4. continuously improve both content and organization through revision and proofreading;
5. develop your grammar, syntax, and sentence structure;
6. produce coherent, organized, readable prose for a variety of rhetorical situations;
7. to analyze, critically evaluate, reflect on, and synthesize information from different sources and produce different forms of knowledge;
8. identify your strengths and weaknesses and improve as such;
9. develop skills of analytic writing via the vehicle of critical thinking;
10. develop an organized, logical argument and counter-argument by identifying its claim, reasons and provide evidence;
11. use questioning as you write as a powerful tool for learning to address different contexts.

TEXTBOOKS

Zemach, Dorothy E; and Rumisek, Lisa A. *Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2003.

Folse, Keith S.; Muchmore-Vokoun, April; and Solomon, Elena Vestri. *Great Writing: Great Paragraphs*. 4th ed. Boston: National Geographic Learning, USA, 2014.

FURTHER READING and INPUT

Folse, Keith S.; Solomon, Elena Vestri, and Clabeaux , David. 3rd ed. *Great Writing: From Great Paragraphs to Great Essays*.

Haugnes, Natasha. *Focus on Writing*. Pearson Education, Inc. NY: USA, 2012. Boston: National Geographic Learning, USA, 2015.

Learners are presented with a variety and complexity of readings assigned by the teacher including but not limited to: short and long paragraphs, different articles, propaganda and news, visual images (charts, graphs and photographs), extracts from the social media (face book, twitter, you tube, etc.), adverts and breaking news, as well as their college textbooks.

TIME FRAME: Two semester teaching program (8 months).

Academic Writing Skills
Y2- Day and Night Classes
Dept. of English – College of Arts/BU 2018-2019
Dr. Phil. Muhammad Alashtar
PROGRAM STARTUP: October, 2018
EXPEXTED PROGRAM FALL: May Fall, 2019

VIRTUAL LEARNING PLATFORM

Students can get access to all materials, videos, PPTs, grading, class announcements, class calendar, blogs, discussions, group task split, and many other features through a very advanced interactive virtual learning platform created by the course teacher in 2016 on the *Blackboard Learning Classroom Management*, developed by the course sites inc. Blackboard, and it is still widely used by students in the writing class at BU. This platform is designed to help students to view content and keep them connected and interacted virtually with the teacher and their peers.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.coursesites.com/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

see also

[https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student?utm_medium=Learn&utm_campaign=Product link&utm_content=Student](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student?utm_medium=Learn&utm_campaign=Product_link&utm_content=Student)

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING ADOPTED

My basic method of instruction follows a student-centered/an inquiry-based technique. In this course, we will use a variety of methods, including in-class discussion, Socratic questioning method SQ, think aloud protocol TAP, focus group discussion FGD, workshops, individual and group presentation, seminar, round table groups, flip lecture, video recalling, etc.

Writing is an intellectually challenging process of gathering, analyzing, assessing, weighing evidence, and passing, with reason and empathy, judgments. Your point of view is a valuable reference to this process. Please make sure that conflicting many viewpoints does not mean you are wrong or the other is right. Knowledge is negotiable and constructive, but is not transferrable. Your writing should more or less comply with correct grammar, proper use of punctuations and transitions, and other rhetorical devices.

COURSE CONTENT

The major topical areas of study include:

1. developing different paragraphs and theses
2. following conventions of standards written English
3. inventing, drafting, editing and proofreading
4. writing reflectively and thinking critically
5. developing style
6. gathering, analyzing, and critically evaluating, and synthesizing different sources
7. engaging in five levels of writing proficiency: paraphrasing, explicating author's statement, level of analysis, critical evaluation, and role-play the author
8. learning to organize and write an essay
9. conducting library and other research methods
10. documenting sources
11. using rhetorical modes including exposition, persuasion, and argumentation
12. using techniques of generating arguments
13. the students' ability to analyse their reasoning and the reasoning of others

CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. Attendance and participation policy

Attendance is a requirement you should thrive to achieve. Attendance policy follows rigorous standards. If you miss more than 10% of our scheduled class meetings (3 absences). I will drop one

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mark for each absence after the third. If you repeat twice, you will have a suspension from the class and get the lowest average and hence fails automatically. In case of extenuating emergency that forces you to miss several class periods, please contact the head of the department beforehand and me in order to discuss some options.

Only excused absences provided by documented papers or notes will be accepted. In this case, please *notify me in advance* in writing either in *hard copy* or via *email*. No late explanation is accepted. Be punctual, arrive in time, and avoid tardiness. For every third tardiness, you will be marked as absent. Besides this, I cannot make up for missed quizzes or in-class assignments. You will get zero. Regular attendance is the main gate to your success simply because our course is not lecture-based, it is rather an engaging and peer-work process in your class, without which you will not be qualified to pass the course.

2. Bonuses and penalties

For excused absence beyond 3 results in one mark drop, and beyond six 3 marks drop. For unexcused absence results in zero a time. For every third tardiness, you will be counted as absent. A perfect attendance will give you a 5-mark average. Bonuses will be also given to you in case of taking part in the departmental events like performing on stage, poster fair, or is listed as one of the top ten students on a regular basis.

3. Academic integrity

The course of academic writing places a high value on intellectual integrity of the students, which otherwise undermines the quality standards of the educational achievement. Each individual work is unique by its own. Cheating on papers, copying ones' assignment or using the internet sources unwisely in any form, or allowing someone to write a part of your work may be construed as a violation. This may include plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, except for the in-class group work. Besides, as our class runs group work assignments, this means that all individual students identified as a group should work together in producing one assignment. At the discretion of the course teacher, the student who cheats, plagiarizes or relies upon others in the completion of part or all of his/her work will receive '**F**' for the assignment, and if repeated more than three times, s/he will fail. One's work should be uniquely one's own. Group work should be genuinely the production of all members.

4. Cell phones and electronic devices

Your cell phones and other electronic devices must be set on a silent or vibrate mode before coming to class and must be kept out of sight during the teacher's presentations. Any violation to this policy, you will be asked to leave the class. Only for learning purposes, however, these devices could be on at the teacher's prior note.

5. Late assignments

The assignments that should be completed during the first and second semesters are 4 total. They should be all turned in in due time. Any delay will not be accepted, and you will get an F grade for any single assignment. Your assignments should receive 5 pts. in each semester. The two credits of a semesters will be added and then be divided by two the final credit will be 5 for each semester, as shown below:

1 st semester	Grade 10pts	Deadline 2018	2 nd semester	Grade 10pts	Deadline 2019
1 st assignment	5 pts.	Thrs. 15 Nov.	3 rd assignment	5 pts.	Thrs. 21 March
2 nd assignment	5 pts.	Sun. 30 Dec	4 th assignment	5 pts.	Tue. 30 April
Average 5pts	5 pts.			5 pts.	

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Grading guidelines

Assignment Grade	Marks 10 pts.
A	9-10
B	7-8
C	5-6
D	3-4
F	0-2

6. Students with special needs (disabilities)

One of the core values of education is that all student should be provided with equal opportunities to receive learning and should have equal access to the course program, facilities, and/or admissions. Unfortunately, there is no office for disability services or foundation at our university. As an alternative, those students with special needs and for any reason are requested to contact me beforehand. I will be more than delighted to help you.

7. Statement of conduct

The major aim of this course is to improve your writing with reason and empathy. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse sects, levels of thinking, cultural, regional, social, perhaps ethnic backgrounds, and life style. Some of the texts we will be discussing might engage you with some controversial topics. Those provocative texts require you with good faith to respect other's viewpoints that differ from your own. Hold your own views to the same quality standards you hold others'. Any disrespectful conduct or funny notes will not be tolerated. Leaving the class, marked as absent, will be the penalty. Dismissal from the class will result, if repeated. To me, you are one and the same created by the only One who differs.

8. Manuscript (assignments) formatting

All your 4 assignments must be word-processed, 1.5 single-spaced using 12-point Time New Roman type face and 1-inch margins. The students who cannot type their work for any reason, please contact me, the team leader of your group or me immediately.

Place the following information in the upper-left hand corner of the first page of each paper:

Academic Writing: MAW201
Your name:
Section:
Date:
Assignment and draft number:

9. Research and Writing Clinic

The Research and Writing Clinic in the department of English provides free consultation hours and tutoring service to ALL students of English. This center is located next to classroom 25. You can sign up with the clinic members or directly with the tutors: Dr. Muhammad Alashtar and Dr. Samir Talib. They can help you to learn various aspects of writing and the writing process, including but not limited to choose a good topic sentence (TS), to develop and organize your paragraphs and short and long essays, to draft, revise, outline, edit, and proofread your work. For further information, please follow up on our Facebook: **research and writing clinic bu**, or email us at: rwclinic.bu2014@gmail.com

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10. Exams: There are two exams for each semester, as indicated below:

1st semester	1 st exam time due:	2nd exam time due:
1st semester	1 st exam time due:	2nd exam time due:

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

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For a successful assignment, mind the following:

1. All your **4** assignments must be typed. No hand written papers will be accepted
2. All your assignments are a prerequisite that must be completed and sent in due time.
3. All your assignments must be handed over electronically via the following **email** (dr.muhalashtar@gmail.com) unless you are instructed otherwise.
4. All assignment will be peer-reviewed and proofread by me.
5. The following tasks are also required for a significant growth in your assignments, such as extra reading, short writings, revision, small group and individual conferences, and many others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The course work consists of in-class writing assignments, in-class exercises, quizzes, individual and group essays, individual and group presentations, poster presentations, seminars, mental maps, video recalling lecture, flip lecture, etc. Your work is based on groups throughout the academic year unless otherwise instructed.
2. You will get a *student's thinking toolkit*. Please, bring it with you every day.
3. You will be assigned a *course code* used throughout the academic year.
4. Your class participation, attendance, punctuality, cooperation and positive interaction are highly expected.
5. Your active participation in this training course is crucial to its success, so relax and speak up! Please, come to class prepared to ask questions and to discuss the assigned tasks in small groups or with the class as whole. Remember that (1) attending every class meeting (and arriving on-time) is necessary to participate fully and (2) you must always show respect to your classmates and, with good faith, to their ideas.
6. You will be provided, on a daily basis, by handouts, posters, visual images, and a weekly work schedule, to name a few.
7. Top ten and the best paper strategy will be adopted.
8. Your commitment and work expectancy are highly appreciated. ***I am here for any kind of help! You are the teachers for tomorrow and the critical thinkers for today!***
9. Due to the large number of students, there will be group splits of ten guided by a coordinating team leader and an assistant. Two students will be selected as teacher/classroom assistants.

ASSIGNMENT PORTFOLIO

Grad F (Unskilled or unacceptable reasoning)

An F paper is unskilled or unacceptable. It exhibits a major weakness in thesis statement, paragraph development, content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, style, and use of proper punctuation marks and transitional devices, and coherence. There is no evidence that the student is genuinely engaged in the task of taking charge of his or her thinking in reading or writing. The students is not analyzing and evaluating what s/he reads and writes.

Grade D (Minimally skilled or poor reasoning)

A D paper shows only a minimal level of reasoning. It lacks by and large organization, and the paragraphs are not well developed. The sentence structure is awkward. The paper shows serious mechanical errors, which are problematic to the reader. There is little evidence that the student is genuinely engaged in the task

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of taking charge of his or her thinking in reading or writing. The student is rarely analyzing and evaluating what s/he reads and writes.

Grade C (Beginning skilled or mixed level reasoning)

A C-level work shows a beginning skilled average level of reasoning. Thoughts are expressed but not deeply. Thesis statement is presented but not fully supported by illustrations and examples. Paragraphs are only partially developed. The c-level work is occasionally analyzing and evaluating what the student reads and writes. The student seems to be simply going through the motions of the assignment, carrying out the form without getting into the spirit of it. On the whole, such work leaves readers feeling not much better informed than when they picked up the essay.

Grade B (Skilled or commendable reasoning)

The B paper is better than average and shows a skilled level of reasoning. It shows depth. Thesis is supported and the organization is clearly set. Paragraphs and sentences are well constructed. Mechanics are clear for the most part. On the whole, there is good evidence that the structure and content is clear, precise, and well-reasoned, with some occasional lapses though. The student in this level is genuinely engaging in the task of taking charge of his or her thinking. S/he shows good reasoning skills in analyzing and evaluating what s/he reads and writes.

Grade A (Highly skilled or exemplary reasoning)

The A paper represents an original and outstanding work. It shows an exemplary level of reasoning. Fresh thoughts, deep insights and stylistic maturing are highly presented. Language is highly expressive, free from jargons, cliché, and some airy abstractions. Paragraphs, organization and effective transitions are nicely developed. The A-level student demonstrates real achievement in grasping a high level of reasoning. Great evidence show that students elucidate a mind beginning to take charge of its own ideas, assumptions, inferences and intellectual processes. The student is masterfully analyzing and evaluating what s/he reads and writes. On the whole, the readers will feel that they have learned something original, have received some unexpected illumination.

Part II: Assessment Criteria

This part of the module explains in full the assessment rubric on which your answers and the grading policy are based.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC CV

Points are awarded on the basis of *clarity, relevance, depth, breadth, accuracy, precision, logic, and fairness*. This portfolio includes items such as

1. Content, organization and coherence (logical development of ideas; introduction, body and conclusion), and
2. Vocabulary range, grammar, punctuation and style.

Grading Rubrics

Content and organization (10 pts.)

1	Grading Scale	0-2 F	3-4 D	5-6 C	7-8 B	9-10 A
	Components	Unskilled writer	Minimally skilled (poor)	Beginning skilled (mixed)	Skilled (commendable)	Highly skilled (exemplary)

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	(unacceptable)	writer	level) writer	writer	writer
Description	The paragraph is not completely developed and organized; the topic is not treated carefully; few developed or related ideas; absence of cohesive devices and/or supporting evidence; <i>complete lack of logical structure</i>	The paragraph is inadequately developed; minimal evidence of clear-cut organization; lack of evidence and minimal use of cohesive devices; ideas are irrelevant; <i>minimal evidence of logical structure</i>	The paragraph is partially logically structured; ideas are either limited or not sufficient; some irrelevant details presented; the organization of the paragraph is only partially presented; problems with the topic sentence; order of ideas; lack of evidence; basic cohesive devices are presented clearly but repeated; <i>the paragraph is partially logical</i>	The paragraph is well-organized; the ideas are well-presented but could be fully developed; the topic is fairly treated; there is evidence that the text is logically sequenced; clear evidence of a good use of cohesive devices but they could be effectively presented; still some inessential material are inserted; <i>an adequate evidence of logical structure</i>	the topic is skillfully developed; the ideas are effectively planned and developed and are all relevant; no unimportant material are presented; very effective organization and clear division of introduction, body and conclusion; flow of ideas and all paragraph parts are logically connected; the paragraph is well-managed and cohesively tied; <i>very good evidence of logical development of a paragraph</i>

Voca. range, grammar, punctuation and style (10 pts.)

Grading Scale	0-2 F	3-4 D	5-6 C	7-8 B	9-10 A
Components	Unskilled writer (unacceptable)	Minimally skilled (poor) writer	Beginning skilled (mixed level) writer	Skilled (commendable) writer	Highly skilled (exemplary) writer

Description	very limited voca. or sentence variety; poor grammar; and no evidence of the use of punctuation marks (PMs); style is very poor; the message is not completely addressed	minimal range of voca.; lacks sentence variety; a wide range of grammatical errors; PMs are not well-presented; the message is inadequately addressed	sufficient range of voca.; still not effective; minor grammatical errors; PMs are presented but there are issues; the message is only partially addressed	good range of voca.; thought with minor problems, grammar is clearly understood; good uses of PMs with some minor problems and misplacement; any misunderstanding is minor	wide range and precise use of voca.; grammar is powerfully presented; no grammatical errors; effective use of PMs; the text is comprehensible and clear
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GRADING and COURSE CREDIT POLICIES

Out of 50 credits is the final grade you get in the end of the course (two semesters). 25 credits for each semester. The following chart describes your final grade in the academic year:

No.	1 st Semester Task Description	Grading 25 credits	2 nd Semester Task Description	Grading 25 credits
1	Assignments (Homework)	05 credits	Assignments (Homework)	05 credits
2	In-class participation	05	In-class participation	05
3	Progress test (quizzes)	05	Progress test	05
3	End semester exam	10	End semester exam	10
Total		25		25
Average Out 50 credits	Points of the two semesters are to be added and the result is 50 credits (Final grade)			
Extra credit	Please note that not every student gets extra credit. Only privileged students who show a wide-ranging scale of tasks and extracurricular activities –like taking part in events, one of the top ten will be assigned bonuses.			

Part III: Syllabus

Week	Course content	Date
	1st Semester: Writing Process	Oct. 2018
1	Icebreakers: syllabus and course information	
2	Writing as an engaging intellectual process: elements of a good vs. bad writing	


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3	Writing mechanism and formatting	
4	The building blocks of a paragraph	
5	Developing titles, theses, introductions, body paragraphs and conclusions	
6	Transitions, punctuations, cohesion and coherence	
7	Developing and supporting paragraphs	
8	The development of ideas: brainstorming as a thinking process	
9	Introducing the types of paragraphs	
10	Descriptive paragraphs	
11	Process paragraphs	
12	Opinion paragraphs	
13	Comparison and contrast paragraphs	
14	Problem solution paragraphs	
15	Course review	
Week		
	2nd Semester: A Transition from Great Paragraphs to Great Essays	Feb. Mid 2019
16	Icebreakers: Course information	
17	From paragraphs to essays: putting all altogether	
18	Essay structure: the 5-paragraph essay	
19	Analysing and evaluating essays outline	
20	Unity and coherence	
21	Introducing essay types	
22	Expository essay	
23	Narrative essay	
24	Persuasive essay	
25	Argumentative essay (I)	
26	Argumentative essay (II)	
27	Argumentative essay (III)	

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28	Argumentative essay (IV)	
29	Argumentative essay (V)	
30	Course review and final remarks	

P.S. A detailed class calendar will be generated on a monthly basis (divided among 8 lectures and seminars). Please, make a regular check of the course web page (course sites by blackboard) and on our Facebook group (*basracritical thinkinggroup*), or via mobile app Reminder.


Muhammad Alashtar
Basra, 20 September 2018

