

ALDS 3401/English 3908
Research & Theory in Academic Writing
Fall 2016
School of Linguistics & Language Studies
Carleton University

Class times: Tuesday & Thursday 11:35 a.m.-12:55 p.m.
Location: 515 Southam Hall
Instructor: Professor Graham Smart
Office: 243 Paterson Hall
Office phone: (613) 520-2600 (ext. 2000)
E-mail: gsmart@connect.carleton.ca
Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:15-2:15 p.m., & by appointment

Please note: I'll be very happy to meet with you during my office hours to discuss any aspect of the course that you have questions about, but please e-mail me in advance so we can arrange a specific time and you're not kept waiting while I'm meeting with other students.

Welcome to **ALDS 3401/English 3908: Research and Theory in Academic Writing**. I look forward to working with you this semester in this *writing-intensive course*. In the course we will be examining contemporary research and theory on what academic writing entails, how writing fosters learning, and how instruction can help students develop their writing abilities. At the same time, we will be looking at the writing that students do in elementary school, secondary school, and university. More specifically, we will be using the four questions below as a touchstone for our work in the course:

- What role does writing play in students' learning?
- What constitutes proficiency in academic writing?
- What approaches to writing instruction appear to be most effective in helping students develop their writing abilities?
- What can students do themselves to improve their academic writing?

Please read this syllabus over carefully, and if you have any questions or need further elaboration, let me know.

Course objectives

The course has six primary objectives:

- To introduce you to theories of academic writing and the development of writing abilities that have appeared in the Writing Studies literature from the 1970s to the present, with a focus on more recent research.
- To familiarize you with the different research methods that have been used to investigate academic writing.
- To introduce you to landmark qualitative empirical research studies of writing in different academic settings: elementary school, secondary school, and university.
- To provide you with opportunities to strengthen your abilities both as a *reader* and as a *writer* of academic texts.
- To help you develop your skills as a researcher.
- To give you experience as a peer-reviewer of other people's writing.

To accomplish these objectives, our classes will include a combination of mini-lectures, regular group

discussions of the course readings and, for the research project, brainstorming and workshop sessions on your writing-in-progress.

Course material

All readings will be available either on-line (I'll be giving you the links) or through cuLearn. **Note:** Please see the reading schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Course work and evaluation

Your final grade will be derived from your participation in class and from the written work you produce for the course, according to the percentages listed below:

A+ = 90-100 B+ = 77-79 C+ = 67-69 D+ = 56-59 F = below 50

A = 85-89 B = 73-76 C = 63-66 D = 53-56

A - = 80-84 B - = 70-72 C - = 60-62 D - = 50-52

Since there is no final exam in this course, supplemental and grade-raiser exams will not be available.

The work for the course is described below.

1) Attendance and participation: 15%

The course functions best for everyone when students attend class regularly, keep current with the assigned reading for each class, and participate actively in group discussions and peer-reviewing sessions. ***For this reason, regular class attendance and participation are required and are a significant factor in evaluation.*** Any more than three absences during the term (for illness, medical appointments, snow storms, etc.) will count against your final grade unless there are serious extenuating circumstances. Please note that repeated lateness to class or early departures from class will count as absence. As well, it's your responsibility to keep track of the number of classes you miss. If you do miss a class, you're responsible for finding out what we did in class that day and what work has been assigned for the next class (sending me an e-mail would be the best way to do this).

2) Reading commentaries: 35%

Producing your reading commentaries will give you the opportunity of using the process of writing to enhance your understanding of course material and to prompt your own ideas in response. The practice of keeping a reading commentary is based on extensive research in Writing Studies showing that regular informal writing about new concepts can help us to make sense of these concepts, connect them to our prior knowledge, and generate our own insights. In other words, writing regularly on any academic topic can enhance our learning significantly.

From the beginning of September until mid-November you will produce two reading commentaries each week: one reading commentary of approximately 350 words (preferably typed) to be written outside of class and handed in on Tuesday; and a second, shorter reading commentary of approximately 150 words to be written during class on Thursdays. If you miss class on a Thursday, you will need to produce the second reading commentary for that week outside of class, in a 350-word text, and hand it in the following Tuesday. ***Please note: consistently handing in the reading commentaries on the date they are due will definitely work in your favour with regard to your final grade for the course.***

Each entry in your reading commentary will include two types of writing: ***a response to a prompt*** and ***exploratory writing***. In the former, you will respond to a specific prompt that I'll give you regarding the reading. In the *exploratory writing*, which should be at least one-quarter of the reading commentary, you can write more freely, raising questions about the reading, arguing for or against its claims, recording your own insights, making connections with your experience, making links to other course readings, exploring ideas for the course research project—anything relevant that comes up for you as you write. I'll evaluate the reading commentaries for their content, but not for grammar, punctuation, or

spelling. (Some students may wish me to point out recurrent errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling; if this is the case for you, please indicate it at the top of each commentary that you hand in.)

3) Research Project: 50%

Beginning in early November and continuing into early December, you will be conducting a research project and writing up your work in a research paper. You will have three options for the project: (1) conducting in-depth research on one of the researchers whose work we've read about in the course; (2) exploring a theme or concept that crosses the work of two or more researchers whose work we have read about; or (3) conducting a qualitative empirical study of student writing here at Carleton. You'll be receiving detailed guidelines for all the stages of the research project later in the term.

Our approach to the research project will follow a workshop model: that is, you'll be developing and sharing your ideas and your writing in stages. The schedule is outlined below:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| November 3: | Oral presentation of research proposals (in small groups) |
| November 8: | Written proposal due (5%) |
| November 15: | Oral progress reports (in small groups) |
| November 24: | Peer conferencing on complete-as-possible drafts of research papers *** |
| November 29: | Brainstorming on issues related to papers |
| December 1: | Peer conferencing on revised drafts of papers *** |
| December 6: | Option consultations on papers |
| December 8: | Copy-editing of papers |
| December 14: | Research paper and related material due (45%) |

Notes: (1) You'll be receiving detailed guidelines for the research project; and (2) please familiarize yourself with following course policies regarding the project:

- ***You must participate actively in all stages of the workshop process to receive full credit for the research project.*** This means, for example, that for the activities marked with an *** in the schedule above, you'll bring a draft of your research paper to class for peer-reviewing. ***If you fail to participate in the different stages of the workshop process, you could lose up to 20 of the 50 marks allocated for the research project.***
- You're expected to hand in the research paper by the due date. Extensions will be granted only under serious circumstances, and only if you contact me before the due date.

Communication between us

I'll be happy to meet with you individually at any point during the term to talk about how the course is going for you. My office hours are on Tuesday and Thursday 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in 243 Paterson Hall. If this time is not convenient for you, we can make an appointment for a time that is convenient. As well, please feel free to e-mail me at any point in the course about any questions or concerns you might have. ***Please use your Carleton e-mail account when communicating with me (this is a requirement of Ontario's privacy legislation).***

Other important information

Academic integrity: You must, of course, produce all your own work for the course. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence that will, at a minimum, result in a failing grade for the course. For the record, here's the FASS official position on plagiarism at the undergraduate level:

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include: reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source; submitting a take-home

examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else; using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment; using another's data or research findings; failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks; handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can, for example, include a final grade of "F" for the course.

For further information on plagiarism and other aspects of academic integrity, please see the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy.

(<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv14>)

Student services and resources

Writing Tutorial Service – 4th floor of MacOdrum Library

Student Life Services – 501 University Centre

Student Academic Success Centre – 302 Tory

Academic accommodation for students with disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your *Letter of Accommodation* at the beginning of the term. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

Accommodation for religious observance:

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

Accommodation for pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *Letter of Accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event for which it is anticipated that accommodation will be required.

Let's work together to have a productive and enjoyable fall semester!

Reading Schedule

Theoretical Perspectives on Writing

From 'writing as product' to 'writing as process'

September 13:

“Writing as a mode of learning,” by Janet Emig (available on-line).

“The process of writing—growing,” by Peter Elbow (available in cuLearn).

September 15:

“A cognitive process theory of writing,” by Linda Flower and John Hayes (on-line).

Social and cultural dimensions of writing

September 20:

“Writing and knowing: Toward redefining the writing process,” by James Reither (on-line)

September 22:

“The idea of genre in theory and practice: An overview of the work in genre in the fields of composition and rhetoric and new genre studies,” by Anne Herrington and Charles Moran (cuLearn).

September 27:

“Generalizing about genre: New conceptions of an old concept,” by Amy Devitt (on-line).

September 29:

“Situating 'genre' and situated genres: Understanding student writing from a genre perspective,” by Aviva Freedman (cuLearn).

Research Studies of Writing in Academic Settings

Elementary school

October 4:

“Co-authoring classroom texts: Shifting participant roles in writing activity,” by Joanne Larson and Maryrita Maier (on-line).

October 6:

“Co-authoring classroom texts: Shifting participant roles in writing activity,” by Joanne Larson and Maryrita Maier.

October 11:

“Staying in the (curricular) lines: Practice constraints and possibilities in childhood writing,” Anne Haas Dyson (on-line).

October 13:

“Staying in the (curricular) lines: Practice constraints and possibilities in childhood writing,” Anne Haas Dyson.

October 18:

“Composing across multiple media: A case study of digital video production in a fifth grade classroom,” by Jason Ranker (on-line).

October 20:

“Composing across multiple media: A case study of digital video production in a fifth grade classroom,” by Jason Ranker.

Secondary school

November 1:

“Genre and thinking in academic writing tasks,” by Sarah Beck and Jill Jeffery (on-line).

November 3:

“Genre and thinking in academic writing tasks,” by Sarah Beck and Jill Jeffery.

November 8:

“Double histories in multivocal classrooms: Notes toward an ecological account of writing,” by Jon Smidt (on-line).

November 10:

“Double histories in multivocal classrooms: Notes toward an ecological account of writing,” by Jon Smidt.

University

November 15:

“Developmental gains of a history major: A case for building a theory of disciplinary writing expertise,” by Anne Beaufort (on-line).

November 17:

“Developmental gains of a history major: A case for building a theory of disciplinary writing expertise,” by Anne Beaufort.

November 19, 24, 26, 31; December 6, 8: No readings or reading commentaries. (You’ll be working on your research project on those dates).