



Foundations English 101 Writing and Reasoning

Why are we here?

"This is one of the great blessings of university life, to learn to speak together and think together in a kind of challenging environment . . . to perhaps verbally scrap and argue together over public issues and matters of broad interest."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We're here to learn. One of the best ways to learn is to write. You cannot think without language. You cannot write without thinking. And it's the thinking we're after. We write to get somewhere--to learn, to explore, to communicate, to commune.

What if I struggle with writing?

Join the club. Writing isn't easy. As William Zinsser explains, "If you find that writing is hard, it's because it *is* hard. It's one of the hardest things that people do." But just because it's hard doesn't mean it should be avoided. Most worthwhile things in life take hard work. As you hone your writing skills, you'll improve your thinking ability and begin to cultivate a skill that you will use throughout life.

How do we become better writers?

I'll let Ursula K. Le Guin, a successful writer, answer that question: "You write. Why do people ask that question? Does anybody ever come up to a musician and say, Tell me, tell me—how should I become a tuba player? No! It's obvious. If you want to be a tuba player you get a tuba, and some tuba music.

And you ask the neighbors to move away or put cotton in their ears.

And probably you get a tuba teacher, because there are quite a lot of objective rules and techniques both to written music and tuba performance.

And then you sit down and you play the tuba, every day, every week, every month, year after year, until you are good at playing the tuba; until you can—if you desire—play the truth on the tuba. It is exactly the same with writing. You sit down, and you do it, and you do it, and you do it, until you have learned to do it."



What do we assume?

What do we assume about you and about this class? First, we assume anyone can write. Anyone can succeed. Second, we assume your writing will improve with practice. We'll practice a lot. Third, we assume you can't learn all there is to learn about writing in one semester. Our aim is mastery of a few key principles. Fourth, and perhaps most important, we assume you are here to learn. Eliot A. Butler

explains: "it is painfully obvious that one can obtain a degree without becoming an educated person, and that unfortunate truth applies worldwide. . . . You can choose to get credit, or you can choose to change your life (still receiving the credit, but now with an improved grade)." His point is that working for a grade will get you, at most, the grade. Learning is more than the grade. You can choose to learn or you can choose to get by. You'll get more from this course—more from life--if you choose to learn.



Course Objectives

By the end of the semester you should be able to do the following:

1. Use effective written and oral communication within varied academic and social contexts.
2. Recognize, carry out, and reflect on the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing).
3. Identify, assess, and evaluate the primary traits of effective communication in your own writing, in the writing of your peers, and in professional documents.
4. Think critically by asking effective questions and recognizing fallacious reasoning.
5. Conduct effective research, distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, and synthesize and cite sources accurately.

Course Texts

Hartvigsen, M. Kip, ed. *I Think*. 1st ed. Rexburg: BYU-Idaho Press, 2008.

MyComp Lab Access (Purchase an access card that will allow you to access an online style guide, text, and writing services.)

Course Assignments

Use the *Lessons* button to access a list of weekly assignments.

Projects

We'll complete four writing projects this semester, including a podcast, a profile, a research-based proposal, and a team presentation. You'll find guidelines for each project in the *Lessons* folders as the course progresses and in the *Course Resources* section.

Weekly Self-Assessments

We'll set standards for each week's tasks and then ask you to honestly evaluate your own preparation and contribution. I reserve the right to adjust scores only if your assessment credits you with work you have not completed.

You'll also have the opportunity to assess your own projects. If our evaluations are within 4%, I'll take the higher score. If our evaluations are within 8%, I'll average the scores.

Weekly Discussion

Louis Agassiz said, "Facts are stupid things until brought into connection with some general law." Deep learning—learning that stays with you—requires you to put what you're learning into context, to ask questions, and to seek for connections between what you're learning and your own experiences. Weekly discussions are designed to help you do that.

You'll each have the chance to lead a class discussion drawn from the week's reading assignments and activities.

Writing Workshops

Writing workshops give you the opportunity to get specific feedback on your work before you turn it in for evaluation.

In addition, reading other students' work is one of the best ways to recognize the qualities of effective writing. So, while you're helping each other prepare drafts for evaluation, you're also strengthening your ability to critique and improve your own writing.

Grammar/Mechanics Diagnostic

You'll complete a diagnostic at the beginning of the semester, work to improve your understanding of those principles, and then take a second diagnostic at the end of the semester.



Course Policies

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty. According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, it is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own." Taking ideas from a source without giving the author credit or taking three or more words in succession from a source without citing the source and marking the material with quotation marks is plagiarism.



****If you plagiarize, you will not receive credit for the plagiarized assignment, you may fail the course, and, in keeping with University Policy, the Honor Code Office will be notified.**

Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the date listed in the course schedule. If for some extraordinary reason you cannot turn your work in on time, you must make arrangements with me for an extension. Each student is entitled to only one extension, so use it wisely. An extension gives you 24 hours from the original due date to hand your work in without a grade cut. **Plan for catastrophes:** back up your work multiple times and resist the urge to procrastinate.



Time Commitment

Writing and revision can be challenging. While you will not spend a great deal of time preparing for difficult, comprehensive exams, you will be tackling several different writing tasks this semester that will require you to manage your time wisely. I urge you to set aside time each day to work on the class.

Course Content Questions

For any questions dealing with course content, please contact the instructor or drop in during my online office hours. I'd be happy to discuss your reading with you, answer questions about the course assignments, or simply discuss your writing. I'm here as a resource to help you reach your writing goals. I check my e-mail daily during the work week and usually respond to e-mails within 24 hours. E-mail is the best way to reach me, but if for some reason you cannot reach me through e-mail, you can contact me by phone: 313-6257.



Technical Questions

For any questions dealing with technical issues—access to exams, instructions for using or logging onto Blackboard, or any problems accessing or using the course, please contact the BYU-Idaho Help Desk: 496-3550 or 1-866-237-5195 (toll free) / helpdesk@byui.edu.



Reasonable Accommodation

In compliance with applicable disability law, qualified students with a disability may be entitled to 'reasonable accommodation.' It is the student's responsibility to disclose to the teacher any special need she/he may have before the end of the first week of class.

Course Grades

Your grade is based on the progress you make towards meeting the course objectives. I use assignments in the following three categories to measure that progress:

Writing Projects (60%) – This category includes the four major projects you'll complete for the course. Each project will be weighted as follows:

Thinking about Thinking Blog – 10%

This I Believe Podcast – 10%

Profile Essay – 15%

Research-Based Proposal – 25%

Individual Proposal 15%

Team Presentation 10%

Assignments (30%) – This category includes your collaborative work: weekly discussions, writing workshops, smaller writing assignments, and team tasks.

Grammar/Mechanics – Final Diagnostic (10%)

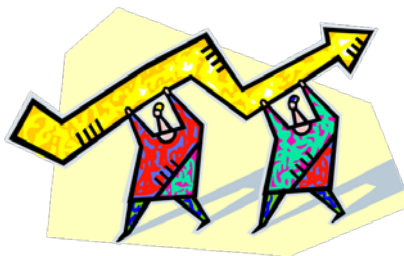
Minimum Competencies

Written work that does not meet minimum competencies can score no higher than a C. To meet minimum competencies, written work may have no more than five errors total from any of the following categories:

- ★ Spelling errors
- ★ Comma splices
- ★ Agreement errors (subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent, tense)
- ★ Run-ons
- ★ Fragments

Think of these minimum competencies as the foundations for clear writing. The fourth week of class you'll complete a grammar/mechanics diagnostic that will help you identify these errors. You'll then

construct your own review plan to address them in your own writing. Our intent is to help you conquer the most common writing errors this semester so that you can write with confidence.



Grading Scale

94-100 = A	74-77 = C
90-93 = A-	70-73 = C-
88-89 = B+	68-69 = D+
84-87 = B	64-67 = D
80-83 = B-	60-63 = D-
78-79 = C+	

