

# Syllabus for Composition I

## 2009-2010

**General Description:** Writing is becoming an all-pervasive skill that individuals need to possess and competently wield in all fields. As such, this course will provide an opportunity to practice a variety of types of writing and help students develop solid writing habits. Students will learn and continue to employ both fundamental and fine-tuned writing skills through a variety of genres: description, narration, definition, proposal, media analysis, writing for the sciences, and humorous writing. There will be both small scope essays (in-class) and large scope essays (developed from multiple drafts and revised with peer and instructor feedback). Students will learn to assess the situation of a given “call to write:” audience, purpose, genre and tone. With each genre, students will learn how to change their writing “voice” and tone to fit with the goals of that essay, and within each genre they will also focus on a few specific traits of good writing (ideas and topics, organization, details and examples, imagery, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice). Students will also read sample essays in every genre and provide close analyses of the techniques employed by the authors. In addition, there will be small and focused grammar and word usage exercises to facilitate mastery of the conventions of Standard English. Higher level thinking will be fostered and encouraged in class discussions, assignments, and essays.

**Course Benchmarks/Objectives:** Students will work throughout the year to develop mastery of the following:

- **Organization:** draft strong and effective introductions and conclusions, fluidly transition and connect ideas, and utilize the most fitting patterns of organization
- **Traits of writing:** integrate imagery, develop a distinct voice, attain sentence fluency, employ appropriate word choice, and substantiate points with details and examples
- **Constructive criticism:** selectively utilize and give feedback in order to effectively improve writing
- **Writing across genres:** adjust writing techniques and styles as appropriate for a variety of genres and audiences

**Grading:** All significant assignments will have written instructions including expectations, due dates, and point values. These will be sent out by email, so you will have easy access to this information, and parents who want to be included on assignment emails just need to ask me to add their names to the list. Small scope essays will be written in class (over two days) and will not go through the full revision process. These aren't worth very many points since the intention of these essays is to give you extra practice developing the skills that have been taught. For all large scope essays, you will be given revision advice from your peers during writers' workshops for your first draft, and after you turn in your 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, I will give you more revision advice. Then you will work on final revisions and turn in your final draft for a grade. I am much more concerned about helping you develop as writers than I am about grades. If you are willing to put in the effort, you will likely receive mainly A's on your essays. If you are still struggling, please be sure to make writing center appointments with me, or another tutor, as often as needed. You may also make writing center appointments if you'd like to take an assignment even further than

required. Writing center is intended to be for all students who want one on one feedback and guidance with their writing.

You will receive a weekly participation grade ranging from 0-10 points. I will enter this in PowerSchool throughout the semester, so you can easily keep track of how these points are affecting you. **Earning an A in this class will require a combination of academic skill and personal responsibility. Things I will be looking for include:**

- Consistent, skillful, and courteous participation in class discussions. This includes both talking and listening. When listening, you should face the speaker and show interest in the points being made. Also, please recall that courteous participation requires being respectful, even if you disagree or think something is silly.
- Positive conduct in the writers' workshops. (Put-downs of other students, or their work, will result in 0 participation points for that week.)
- Good use of class time. This means doing what you are supposed to be doing during class. Talking with friends, playing on the computers, or goofing off will never be considered "good use of class time," and will therefore lower your participation grade.
- Consistent organization and preparation. Be on time to class (in your seat, ready to work when the bell rings). Have all necessary supplies upon arrival in class (pen/pencil, paper, reading materials, flash drive, "writer's handbook," and your homework).
- Written assignments should be printed out prior to arrival in class and turned in on time.
- Playing computer games or doing homework for other classes during this class will generate an automatic zero in participation points for that week (playing computer games will also result in losing your computer for at least a day). If you are done before others in class, you may research further information about the current topic being studied.

These requirements will make our class run smoothly, establish good habits of responsible behavior, and keep your teacher sane and cheerful. If you've ever had a teacher who is neither sane nor cheerful, you will know that this is a worthy goal. ☺

**Late work:** If you are unable to get an assignment in on time, you may contact me *before the assignment is due*, asking for an extension. I have no problem being flexible with due dates, *once in a while*, because I'd much rather receive your best possible work than something slapped together at the last minute. However, if you have not made another plan with me prior to the due date, the grade on your assignment will be lowered by 5% each day that it is late. This policy of accepting late work is for the anomalies – those rare occasions where you are not able to hand in your work on time. The policy is not a get-out-of-jail-free card for habitual late work. If handing things in late becomes a regular problem, we'll need to determine an agreed upon plan of action to help you develop good time management habits to get your work done responsibly.

**Classroom Policies:** This class will follow the DA discipline plan as described in the handbook and discussed during orientation, but basically: just be kind and do your best. I am really excited to be working with all of you. Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, or

suggestions. My goal is for us to be working together, learning together, and having fun together.

## Tentative Schedule

<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Class Topics</b>
week 1	Diagnostic period
week 2	Diagnostic period
week 3	Essay organization techniques
week 4	Narrative essay (large scope)
week 5	Revising and editing
week 6	Organization exercises
week 7	Detail, description, and imagery
week 8	Introduction to descriptive essays and begin writing essays
week 9	Finish essays and do revising and editing
week 10	Descriptive essay (small scope)
week 11	Introduction to definition essays and exercises
week 12	Sentence fluency, syntax, and voice
week 13	Definition essay (large scope)
week 14	Revising and editing
week 15	Media analysis
week 16	Media analysis
<b>Spring Semester</b>	<b>Class Topics</b>

week 1	Learning how to write for standardized tests – CRT, SAT, ACT, essay exams, etc.
week 2	Essay practice
week 3	Essay practice
week 4	“Writing to move others”
week 5	Write essays (large scope)
week 6	Revising and editing
week 7	“Writing for science”
week 8	“Writing for science”
week 9	“Writing to amuse others”
week 10	Humor exercises and begin essays
week 11	Write, revise, and edit
week 12	Introduction to writing a proposal
week 13	Write, revise, and edit essays
week 14	Mail proposal to intended audience and adapt proposal essay to become an in class speech
week 15	Prepare and deliver speeches
week 16	Finish delivering speeches