

# Professional Development Workshop

Dr. Everett Hamner

Western Illinois University, Fall 2016

ENG 376, Meetings by Arrangement

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## General Catalog Description & Prerequisites

Students prepare application materials for internships, jobs or further schooling, a portfolio of writing, and an essay that articulates personal and professional goals. Students will also take part in workshops for career and or educational opportunities for English majors. Prerequisite: junior standing.

## Specific Description & Goals

This 1-credit course is designed to prepare students for their next steps beyond the English major at WIU-QC. Those plans will vary by student, and the course requirements therefore are intended to be as flexible as possible. However, all students in the course will complete a carefully revised resumé or *curriculum vitae* (CV), participate in workshops (scheduled via email) with their peers, and fulfill both writing and public engagement projects related to their professional development.

## Texts for Purchase

No books required. However, we will read/view and discuss the following together:

~Edmundson, Mark. "The Ideal English Major." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 29, 2013).

<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Ideal-English-Major/140553/>

~Sanford J. Ungar, "7 Major Misperceptions about the Liberal Arts"

<http://www.cic.edu/News-and-Publications/Multimedia-Library/CICConferencePresentations/2011%20Presidents%20Institute/make-the-case2.pdf>

~"The Value of a Humanities Degree: Six Students' Views." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 5, 2011).

<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Value-of-a-Humanities/127758/>

~Hart Research Associates, "It Takes More than a Major."

[http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2013\\_EmployerSurvey.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf)

~Michael Bérubé, "What Will You Do with an English Major? Plenty." *CNN* (January 4, 2013).

[http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/04/my-view-what-will-you-do-with-an-english-degree-plenty/?hpt=hp\\_c3](http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/04/my-view-what-will-you-do-with-an-english-degree-plenty/?hpt=hp_c3)

~John Landy, "In Defense of Humanities" (lecture, video excerpt, December 6, 2010).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8VssKBCQ4A&>

~"The Role of Higher Education in Career Development." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 2012). <http://chronicle.com/items/biz/pdf/Employers%20Survey.pdf>

~Goldie Blumenstyk, "Liberal-Arts Majors Have Plenty of Job Prospects, if They Have Some Specific Skills, Too." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2016). <http://chronicle.com/article/Liberal-Arts-Majors-Have/236749>  
 ~David Kalt, "Why I Was Wrong about Liberal Arts Majors" *Wall Street Journal* (2016).  
<http://blogs.wsj.com/experts/2016/06/01/why-i-was-wrong-about-liberal-arts-majors/>

### Grading Criteria

~An **A** recognizes broad and deep understanding of the course material, regular and insightful discussion contributions, and very strong written work—a major impact on the course's success.  
 ~A **B** indicates good commitment to coursework, demonstrable contributions and achievements in both verbal and written analysis, and tangible positive impact on other students' learning.  
 ~A **C** reflects adequate completion of coursework, including satisfactory participation and writing.  
 ~A **D** or **F** denotes incomplete or unsatisfactory coursework, unsatisfactory participation (missing more than 25% of class time or 4+ classes), and/or detraction from course goals (via plagiarism or otherwise).

I will figure final grades using the university scale (A, B, C, D, or F, with pluses/minuses) and the values below (with minor adjustments as needed).

20%	Participation in group discussions & workshops
20%	Resumé/CV
30%	Writing Activity
30%	Public Engagement Activity

### Brief Looks at Assignments

**Resumé/CV.** This item will be submitted twice: once in draft form for group workshop discussion, and again in final form for grading. Student models will be provided, but see the following for guidance: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/23/>.

**Writing and Engagement Activities:** Some activities could apply to either category, and in such cases the student will be allowed to choose where they are counted. Critical elements: (a) that each project is clearly tied to the individual student's short- and long-term interests; (b) that the project provides measurable value both for the student's résumé and their ability to imagine future opportunities; (c) that the project enables learning that would be unlikely to occur via another means (e.g. mere online research). Each project will be decided in consultation with students, but here are some initial options:

Potential Activities	Writing	Engaged
Develop, submit, and present a paper proposal to a conference	X	X
Develop and submit an application for research funding	X	
Revise and submit a paper for potential publication	X	
Present a paper at an event on- or off-campus		X
Apply for and complete some portion of an internship related to your professional development		X
Volunteer for an organization related to your professional development		X
Organize an activity sponsored by IDEAS or another student organization		X
Give a guest lecture		X
Write a series of articles for <i>River's Edge</i>	X	

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The following is part of all of my syllabi. Please read it carefully, but keep its generality in mind.

**My Teaching Philosophy and Expectations of Students**

The better we understand each other's expectations, the more quickly we can develop a good working relationship. Here are a few key elements of my teaching philosophy:

~I want students to engage me and each other authentically and maturely. I hope this course will spark your curiosity in many ways, and that happens best when students honestly *and* tactfully share reactions to controversial topics. I intentionally raise such issues because a public university classroom is a uniquely valuable setting in which to explore and learn from frank, respectful disagreement. I aim for us to develop a classroom community that everyone appreciates and that extends beyond its walls.

~*Just as critically*, I expect students to be professionally responsible. You should approach this course as you might a challenging, rewarding job, one with tasks that are yours alone. I well understand that it is *very* hard to balance multiple classes, paid work, childrearing, and other responsibilities, but my roles include challenging you beyond your comfort zone and honestly assessing your academic work (not your value as a human being). Having a good sense of how your work stacks up, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses, is critical for your future decisions. Do your best to remember: a grade is a snapshot of a brief moment (and even a semester is brief); it takes a lot of these together to begin to illustrate your abilities, and even your entire college GPA will never convey those fully.

~While we will be studying fields in which I am relatively expert, I approach this class as a learner, too. Wisdom is not just knowledge, but humility, a deepening awareness of how much one does *not* know. I spent over a decade earning my graduate degrees not to hoard power, but to be in a position to empower others. You show you are ready for that with your simultaneous investment. In short, what you get out of this course will be directly related to what you put into it, during and beyond classtime.

**Attendance & Participation**

My courses differ substantially from those requiring regurgitation of memorized information. Our goals include learning new interpretive approaches, understanding diverse people and ideas, expanding critical thinking and creativity, strengthening analytical and writing skills, and learning from each other's unique backgrounds. Thus preparation for each session, regular on-time attendance, and thoughtful discussion participation are crucial. *Except in extreme circumstances, each class missed beyond 3 (with tardiness or early departure counting as ½ class) will automatically lower the final mark by 1/3 grade (e.g. missing 4 classes changes a B to a B-). Extensive absences will result in an "F" for the course.*

**Classroom Courtesies**

Please excuse yourself when necessary; transitions are the best times. Please mute cell phones and other potential distractions; obviously, laptops and other electronics should not be used during quizzes. Finally, please wait to put away materials until we call it a day; I will respect your schedules as well.

**Communication**

While there are occasional errors, I do my best to build a trustworthy syllabus that won't need major adjustments. Please read it thoroughly; it answers most routine questions. Also, keep in mind that unless you expect to be gone for multiple class meetings in a row, I don't need to know about illnesses, transportation problems, work conflicts, or the other ordinary challenges. When you have a question not addressed on the syllabus or in class, please ask after class or in office hours. If that isn't possible, email is the next best option (much faster than voicemail). My goal is to respond within 2 business days, but if my answer is detailed, I may ask to shift the chat to office hours. Finally, be aware that I sometimes use email to make class announcements, so ensure I have an address you check daily.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Q. Can I make up the quiz I missed?  
A. Yes—but only within the next week (whether in office hours, during the next class meeting's break, or immediately afterward). Also, I only offer this opportunity once per semester, barring extreme circumstances (which do not include having to work, car breakdowns, deaths in friends' families, etc.).
2. Q. Can you tell me what I missed in class?  
A. Not really; the experience of most of our conversations and even my presentations will be difficult to replicate in other forms. However, I can say that almost every week, I hand out some form of "discussion notes," and I usually get these posted on the course website (under "Content") within 24 hours.
3. Q. What should I write about?  
A. What do you care about? What has grabbed you and evoked some sort of emotional response, whether positive, negative, or in some combination? I regularly encourage students to engage texts and questions that have significant personal resonance; most people do their best work when it means more than a grade. If you're having a hard time getting at what you care about, seek out conversation—not just with me and peers, but also with family, friends, and others who know you well. Sometimes having to introduce your learning to those unfamiliar with the material helps the most in figuring out what excites you.
4. Q. How does your grading scale work?  
A. My system may mean your grade is higher than you think. Western Online will compute your current course grade using my formula, but it's simple enough to do yourself. The maximum possible points for the course is 100, so divide your total by that (or by the points available as of a given date), then multiply that number by 4. This puts your score on the 4.0 scale, which I then translate to a letter grade. The same process can be used for any individual assignment. So, for example, if you earned 8 out of 10 points on a quiz, you would divide 8 by 10 (= .80), then multiply that by 4 (=3.20), and that would be between a B and a B+. In each case, I reserve the right to bump the grade up a notch if I believe it's warranted (or rarely down, most often when there are attendance problems like those described earlier in the syllabus).
5. Q. Do you want a hard copy of my paper, and when will it be graded?  
A. Please submit papers via the course website only; if it should be down when a deadline is approaching, emailing the paper and then posting it the next day is fine. My goal is to return papers online within a week of the due date. Late papers can take longer; please alert me of such submissions with an email.

## **Further Writing Assignment Guidelines**

In addition to utilizing the argumentative essay revision guide at the end of this syllabus, it is worth familiarizing yourself with a good style guide. I use MLA style most often, but other styles (Chicago, APA, or another with pre-approval) are fine as long as they are consistently applied. Please use this page setup on all assignments, unless specified otherwise: 1" justified margins on all sides; size 12, Times New Roman font; and double-spacing. Finally, provide a cover page including paper title, course title and my name, your name, and date, as well as a list of works cited or a bibliography. Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments should be submitted online as a docx, doc, or rtf file.

## **The Writing Center**

"The U.S. Bank WIU-QC University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-on-one assistance available is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and even working through grammatical problems. The writing center is located in QC Complex 2219. Call 309-762-9481 for an appointment and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment."

## **Late Work**

*Barring extreme emergencies or prior arrangement, I will deduct one-third of a grade for each week (or portion thereof) that an assignment is late. If you anticipate special difficulty in meeting a deadline, please discuss this with me privately and well in advance so that if warranted, we can consider special arrangements. Readings and assignments are in many ways cumulative, so it is important that you keep up; at the same time, we lead busy lives and occasionally other priorities intervene. Balancing those realities, my policy aims to make being on-time important without making a rare delay devastating.*

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are among the most serious violations of a student's integrity and of relationships with the instructor, fellow classmates, and the university. In the humanities, plagiarism most often involves presenting another person's specific words or ideas as one's own, whether by copying or closely paraphrasing, and without citing the source. *Please be aware that such an offense will at minimum result in an "F" on the assignment and in many cases leads to an "F" for the course.* In many of my courses, I briefly review proper citation, but if you have questions about how to credit an idea or information source, ask. If you are unsure about definitions or consequences of academic dishonesty, consult WIU's Student Academic Integrity Policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

## **Counseling Services**

"Confidential counseling services are available for WIU-QC students. Time management, stress management, balancing work and family, study skills, low self-esteem, relationship problems, depression, and anxiety are some examples of issues that students may address in personal counseling. Students may call 309/762-1988 to make an appointment with Counseling and Career Services."

## **Accommodations**

"Students with disabilities: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner."

## **Sex Discrimination/Title IX**

"University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: [http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>."

## **Student Rights & Responsibilities**

For further information on expectations for both students and university personnel, please see <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>.

## Dr. Hamner's Argumentative Essay Revision Checklist

### The Introduction

1. **Hook:** Will your introduction (including the first sentence) efficiently grab readers' attention without being silly, exaggerated, or disconnected? Is the shift from it to the paper's thesis natural or forced?
2. **Thesis:** Is it clear what sentence(s) convey the paper's central claim?  
**Strengthening your thesis:**
  - *Is your claim obvious or subtle? Boring or daring? Outlandish or plausible?*
  - *Is your claim vague or specific? General or precise?*
  - *Is something significant clearly at stake in your argument? Have you provided a sense of why it matters whether your reader buys or dismisses your claim?*
3. **Map:** Does the introduction preview the order in which the paper will examine the evidence?

### The Body

4. **Main Points:** Can you summarize in a single phrase the main point and/or task of each body paragraph, or are some paragraphs' goals or relevance to the thesis unclear?
5. **Topic Sentences and Concluding Sentences:** Within a given paragraph, do the topic sentence and concluding sentence fit, without being identical? Do they provide meaningful links between paragraphs?
6. **Organization:** Are there any paragraphs that don't make logical sense in the organization of the essay—e.g. too-short/disconnected "lonely" paragraphs or too-long/repetitive "bullying" paragraphs? Should any be removed or integrated elsewhere? Can you reorder so the argument's force grows more naturally?
7. **Textual Evidence/Quotation:** Is there sufficient evidence from specific texts (at least one quotation per body paragraph, as a general rule) to back up the argument's main points? Are there appropriate page number citations? Does the paper introduce quotations with a sense of their original context? After quotations, do you offer interpretations of their meaning or just expect readers to hear them as you do?
8. **Minimal Summary, Maximum Analysis:** Except in briefly introducing unfamiliar key text(s), does the paper avoid plot summaries? Does *your* interpretive and analytical work remain the focus?
9. **Reasonable Specifics, Not Generalities or Overreaches:** Does your paper resort to vague generalities that might describe any text? ("The author uses lots of description to help readers understand.") Does it include gross overstatements that cost you credence? ("In this story everything is about death.")

### The Conclusion

10. **Closure:** Does the conclusion bring the essay to a meaningful close or end abruptly? Does it avoid exact restatement of the introduction, but still reinforce your main points? Does it suggest how the essay's main ideas might be expanded into other contexts and why it matters that your reader take them seriously?

### Mechanics & Style

11. **Grammatical & other mechanical issues:** Has at least one strong writer proofread your paper?  
**Among the most common problems (beyond spelling, capitalization, basic punctuation):**
  - *Pronoun reference: are the referents of your pronouns clear? Do they agree in number?*
  - *Run-on sentences and fragments: is each of your sentences a single, complete thought?*
12. **Stylistic issues:** Have you presented your work in the most professional, attractive manner possible?  
**Among the most common problems, especially for less experienced writers:**
  - *Verbal "fluff": is every word and phrase doing real work toward demonstrating your thesis? Have you eliminated as much repetition as possible? You want the "impact per word ratio" as high as possible.*
  - *Have you stayed in the present tense while writing about literature, film, or other artistic texts?*
  - *Have you provided an accurate, unique, provocative, inviting title?*
  - *Does your paper fit the length and formatting requirements?*