


ENGLISH 101

Writing Your Way Through Western
Fall 2022



Instructor: Sophia Brauner (she/her)
CRN: 40052
Classrooms: MF HU 101, W HU 104
Classtime: 10:00-11:20
Email: braunes2@wwu.edu
Office: HU342
Office Hours: M 3-4, T 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

Your **English 101** course is dedicated to challenge yourself as a thinker, reader, writer, and designer. Welcome! In here you'll be engaging and exploring something that you, no doubt, already know a great deal about: writing, language, and communication.

By closely considering the importance of the places out of which writing of all sorts arise, you'll discover some new things not only about the power and often serious consequences of composition, but also about yourself. Learning to read and write in differing contexts and with differing tools will benefit you regardless of the life you're chasing after. Simply put, good writing, in whatever form it takes, can make lots happen.

What you need:

Daily attention to our canvas site and calendar

Frequent **access to a computer**

Notebook, laptop, or tablet for in-class writing

English 101 Course Aims

Writing Looks & Works Different in Different Places

Writing is everywhere. You're looking at it right now and you've probably done tons of it today already. Whether you love writing or loathe it, it's all around us and shows up in different and surprising ways—not only in academia, but in news, social media, on movie posters, in podcasts, and every course syllabus your instructors are throwing at you. **Writing is part and parcel of nearly every human endeavor, and many endeavors own their existence and essence to writing. Writing is one of the primary ways we navigate life's complexities. It's often how we capture our wild worlds. In English 101 You will explore how writing shows up in different contexts and for different audiences.**

Writing in All Its Forms

We'll write in all its wonderful forms for differing, concrete audiences. We'll spend heaps of time and effort looking at the writing you do, often reflecting on how it might better surface meaning and affect to others.

Rhetorical Thinking

The Course is designed to help you strengthen your capacity to understand, develop, and engage various strategies for seeing connections between and across systems of meaning-making.

Reading & Engaging With Texts

In this course, we'll push to 'read' for better understanding, but we'll also work together to try to read well enough that we can incorporate all the material we encounter into our own writing.

Asking Good Questions

Learning to create or begin to work from a position of 'not knowing' is challenging. We'll practice asking questions that often lead to better, more useful questions before they lead to anything like answers.

Research Practices

We'll take up some practices that help us all come to terms with what research might be about, which includes so much more than the library and the internet.





Course Projects

You'll work on two main projects throughout the quarter. In each project, you'll explore the same topic we'll develop at the beginning of the quarter. Head over to the Canvas Calendar for the rubrics and due dates. Here, I'm giving you a quick overview of the two projects.

Exploring a place:

Each of our major projects is designed to help you explore questions that emerge from obsessing over one place that you feel compelled to spend some time with. The questions you ask will help others re-see or discover new ways of understanding, maybe even occupying, this place.

The place you take up in this class is, indeed, wide open with one exception: **You need to be able to directly** access it. In other words, your place needs to be about something you can concretely observe and study.

1) Podcast Episode

Podcast episodes can function as an exploratory genre that require you to develop good inquiry questions to chase after, to practice both conventional and unconventional research methods, to gather ideas from others, and **to compose in written text and audio. Creating a podcast episode will require you to listen to your writing—to really grapple with the ways you're making meaning for audiences that matter to you.**

Your exploration will guide you toward different, more focused questions and then theorize about.

2) Observe/Analyze/Theorize – OAT Project

In this writing project, you'll work from all your good writing and thinking in the podcast to research and **build a Theory. A Theory is not like a thesis that you argue and defend. Rather, you're emerging a theory grounded in observations and analysis.** Sweet! We'll talk more about this as we go researching together.

College can be overwhelming, especially if it's your first year. I get that and I don't want to make life more complicated for you. So, most of your assignment work will happen in class where we'll workshop your ideas together and you'll get loads of feedback from me and your peers. If you feel even a little bit lost or are struggling to get your work in on time, communicate that with me right away. Reach out to me after class, come to my office hours, or send me an email. **I'm happy to help you!**

Requirements and Responsibilities

Technology Responsibilities

Familiarity with certain technologies is crucial for success in this course. I expect you are proficient with email, Canvas, and a word processor. We'll explore other tools in class that you might not have used before. I do not expect you to have a firm grasp on these tools, but I ask you to be patient enough with the learning curve, graceful enough with yourself, and brave enough to just keep working at it, pushing buttons until you figure it out or until it breaks. And when that happens, ask the internet for help!

Collaborative Work

We will be creating a great deal of material together and supporting one another in differing ways, so honest collaboration is crucial in this course. You're responsible for reading and listening to other people's work, being kind in class, asking good questions, and working toward really hearing each other before responding. Reading out your own work can make you feel vulnerable. We will honor that vulnerability and build a space together that not only allows for the powerful actions that can grow from vulnerability but welcomes and encourages them. I'm going to work hard to foreground the collaborative spirit underlying the notion of rhetoric and learning. I ask you to help me in this work.

Academic Integrity

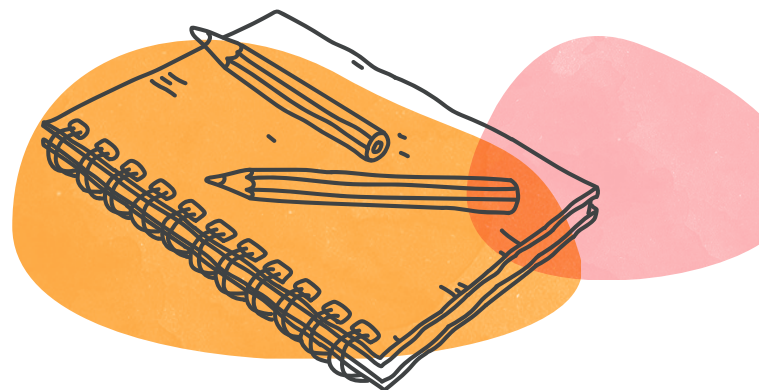
WWU students and their instructors are expected to adhere to guidelines set forth by the Dean of Students in „Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure,“ which students are encouraged to read [here](#).

Accommodations & Campus Resources

I am always thankful to learn about how our course can be more accessible and welcoming to you. This course is designed so that all students can be successful, regardless of physical, psychological or cognitive disabilities. Whether or not you have a registered disability, I encourage you to [apply for accommodations](#) through the Disability Access Center.

Attendance

We collectively agree that missing class doesn't automatically affect your grade. If you need to miss class for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to communicate your absence to Sophia beforehand (no need to justify your absence), to reach out to Sophia or to peers about that day's activities, and to check Canvas for assignments and homework. You understand that a lot of work happens in class and that neither your peers nor Sophia can provide a full account of what has happened in class. You understand that you can only pass this class by completing all the work and by adhering to the Labor Contract.



Evaluation: Let's talk about grades!

Dear Class:

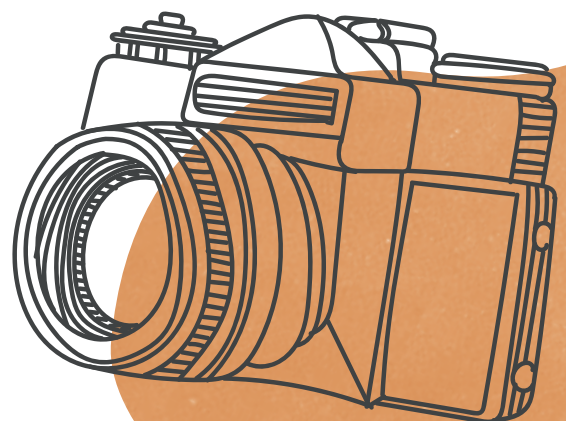
In most learning situations outside of school, you never receive grades. The learning that occurs in martial arts, cooking, dance, or yoga studios does not use any grading. Why? In these “studio” classes, it seems meaningless to give students grades, right? And yet without any grades, those students get better at martial arts, better at dance, and better at cooking. I know we that can't radically change our institution's grading culture in one quarter, but these studio learning situations should prompt us to ask some big questions: Why are grades meaningless in those settings but seem so important in a university setting? How do grades affect learning in classrooms? What social dynamics do the presence of grades create? In both the classroom and in the “studio,” instructors provide students with evaluative feedback pointing out where they've done well and where improvement is still possible. In the studio situation, students help each other, even rely on each other for this feedback. Why is that so rare in the classroom?

So, here's one of the biggest hurdles I'm trying to overcome: Using conventional grading structures often leads students to think more about their “A” or their “C” than about their writing and thinking; it leads them to worry more about pleasing a teacher or fooling one than about figuring out what they really want to learn. Conventional grading may cause you to be reluctant to take risks with your writing and ideas—it certainly stopped me from taking risks in college. The set-up of the educational system moves us to think of our work only in terms of grades, not in terms of personal and professional growth. We get frustrated when we don't receive the grade we desire and lose track

of the cool projects we do produce. Conventional grading, I'm convinced, doesn't allow you to fail in spectacular ways, which is a primary way in which people learn. The psychological research in education has demonstrated over and over that letter grades not only do not help students learn, but they can actually get in your way.

For these reasons, I am incorporating a labor contract instead of a letter system for grading in our class. The contract is all about the labor you do for this course.

So, what exactly does that mean for you? I'm using a form of evaluation that I think will help you focus on how you engage your own learning. I'm convinced that such a contract fits better with a course that is built on the idea that a great deal of learning can occur alongside production—alongside the making of cool projects. Ultimately, I'm interested in giving my attention, my concern, and my care to your labor—the work you actually put in and the risks you take. That's what I hope you care about too. Of course, when you give all your attention, concern, and care to the ways in which you work, you'll produce high quality projects that you and I can both be proud of.



So, what we're going to try to do together is approximate the evaluative conditions of a studio class. If you're looking to game the system and do the least amount of work to get the highest possible course grade, you're going to really struggle here. You'll be frustrated, even angry. But if you wish to challenge yourself as a writer, a reader, and a rhetorician, and are willing to dig into some work, and even take some weird risks within that work, then this is the class for you. Again, **the idea is that I celebrate and concentrate on your labor, not the "quality" of your final projects.** Although we will discuss quality and how it is important to your success, but not necessarily important to your course grade.

My hope is that this contract system will encourage you to take risks in your writing and to work harder in class than you might be used to, knowing I am trying to value both risk and hard work.

Good, deep, important learning often happens because of failure—so it's really not failure at all. **Failure really only happens in our class when you just do not do the work—the labor.** Most importantly, what looks like failure in this class can show us our weaknesses, misunderstandings, and opportunities for growing and changing.

This will help you build strategies of self-assessment that function in ways far more useful to you than gauging some professor's approval based on a letter they write on your paper. I'm happy you're here and I'm so ready to get to work with you!

Cheers

Sophia

Sophia



The Contract

This contract outlines the labor that I expect of you in the different activities of this class and how I'll evaluate your labor.

IN CLASS

Collaboration, Readiness, Attendance:

You agree to work cooperatively and collegially in groups.

You come prepared and are ready to work when class starts. That means, have something to write ready on your desk. When we're in the lab, log onto your student account right away.

You agree to hand in all of your work on time. I will not accept late work. You can miss **two pieces of homework** without it affecting your grade. Drafts, however, cannot be missed, whether you're in class that day or not. If a serious and unavoidable problem comes up, contact me prior to any deadline to determine what we can do.

You agree to bring your drafts to class, either digitally or printed.

You agree to adhere to the attendance policy described on page 4 of this syllabus.

You agree to respect every class member's names and pronouns.

OUTSIDE OF CLASS

Podcast Episode & OAT:

Each project comes with a rubric outlining the criteria necessary for you to complete the project. If you meet all the criteria, you'll receive an A. You agree to carefully study the rubric for each project and perform the labor that is required to meet all criteria.

Note that you can't lose points because, in this class, you start with nothing and then work toward what's possible for each of your projects!

You agree to reach out to me when you can't get your work in on time so we can work out a plan to get you back on track.

Podcast Episode & OAT:

When asked to revise your work, you will reshape, extend, complicate, or substantially clarify your ideas.

Revisions must somehow respond to your colleagues' and my feedback in order to "count" as revisions and to be marked as complete.

Your final assignments must be copy-edited, that is free from most typos and weird grammatical issues. As long as I can still follow your ideas, I don't care about spelling and grammar—your ideas are much more interesting!

That's the Labor Contract! By staying in class, it's what you agree to do. And it's what will help you create projects of which you can be legit proud!