

Course Portfolio: **PAI106, English Composition** (Fall 2015)

Instructor: Dixon, Michael

Overview:

The overall purpose of the course is to improve students' English writing ability and enable them to produce logical, well-organized, easily-understandable essays. Understanding the importance of careful research and citing reliable sources is also emphasized. Completion of writing and analysis exercises in the textbook will improve student's understanding of proper essay structure and the different types of essays (and their uses).

Design:

The course is designed to help students understand, research, and produce various types of essays. The textbook for the course is *Great Writing 4: Great Essays, Fourth Edition* by Keith Folse, April Muchmore-Vokoun, and Elena Vestri Solomon (Cengage Learning). Its primary focus is explaining the parts of a good paragraph (introduction [including hook and thesis statement], body, and conclusion), the different types of paragraphs (narrative, comparison, cause-effect, and argument), and the writing process.

Another vital concern in writing well is simply paying careful attention: paying attention to each word and each sentence. This is often the most difficult aspect to teach. Students will often pay attention to the concepts we have just covered only long enough to complete an exercise that immediately follows the lesson, but they fail to apply that knowledge on their next assignment.

Enactment:

The textbook includes extensive explanations of all concepts involved in writing various types of academic essays. Numerous exercises allow students to practice analyzing the elements of an essay and to develop the skills needed for writing effective essays.

Students grades are based on several factors: attendance, participation in class, completion of and performance on assignments, and essays (see the syllabus attached at the end of this portfolio).

The students' first major assignment is a one-page essay about an interesting event that occurred during the previous few months. This assignment must be printed out in a strict format described in the syllabus and further explained and demonstrated in a format sample (see the format sample attached at the end of this portfolio). This assignment has two major functions: providing a baseline example of each student's writing level, and emphasizing that students must carefully follow particular guidelines when submitting work.

The second major assignment is a two-page narrative essay describing a frightening or stressful event in the student's life (the university entrance exam is not an acceptable topic). Students must bring a rough draft of the essay to class in the week prior to submitting the essay to me; during a peer-editing session, students carefully proofread and edit one another's writing. Careful editing is an essential component of good writing; peer-editing sessions demonstrate this importance and give students an opportunity to practice their editing skills.

The third major assignment is the midterm essay, a three-page comparison essay. Choosing a suitable topic is also emphasized. Student do brainstorming exercises to generate possible topics, then discuss their ideas to determine the best topic. Peer reviews also take place after the first two pages are completed, after the rough draft is completed, and after an initial revision of the essay. Multiple peer-editing sessions allow students more time to practice their editing skills and more opportunities to improve their writing. Multiple sessions also reinforces the idea that writing is a process that requires careful attention and that simply writing a single draft the night before a paper is due will not produce a good result.

The next major assignment is a three-page cause-effect essay. The procedures described about for choosing and topic and peer-editing and revision are also follow.

The last major assignment is the final essay. The final essay is a four-page essay produced through the method described in the previous paragraph: careful choice of topic and multiple rounds of peer review and revision.

In addition to assignments in the textbook and essay writing assignment, students also read the novel *Mother Night* by Kurt Vonnegut and discuss the issues raised in the book. In the week before final exams, students have a timed essay about a topic chosen from the novel.

Results:

At the end of the course, the majority of students demonstrate an understanding of essay structure organization. Most can produce a well-organized essay. Other professors have reported that students taking the course show much better competence than students (from previous years) who did not complete the course.

Some students show significant improvement in the ability to write clear, concise, logical essays; unfortunately, many students only show a small improvement in the quality of their writing. This is primarily because of the varying levels of motivation among students and their varying levels of sustained, focused attention.

An interesting finding is that quite often students who do not write well in longer essays can write more clearly in a short, timed essay. This would indicate that those students have the ability to produce better writing, but they fail to sustain the level of attention and effort needed when required to write at length.

While I regularly encourage students to set up appointments during my office hours to ask questions and get help, most students do not take advantage of the opportunity. Students who do meet with me individually show the greatest improvement. Unfortunately, students with the weakest skills are rarely the ones who ask for extra assistance (though, on those occasions where they do, they often show very significant improvement).

Ideally, spending more time assisting weaker students on an individual basis could result in the most benefit to those students. However, in practical terms, it is very difficult to achieve this goal because such students are the least motivated and least likely to make the extra effort (which is why they are weaker students).

English Composition Spring 2016

Textbook: *Great Writing 4: Essays, Fourth Edition* by Keith Folse, April Muchmore-Vokoun, and Elena Vestri Solomon (Cengage Learning)

Grading:

Homework & Class Assignments	30 %
Midterm Essay	25 %
Final Essay	25 %.
Attendance and Participation	20 %
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Total	100 %

Midterm and Final Exams:

Instead of in-class exams, there will be midterm and final essays. Each essay will be worth 25% of your final score.

Absences & Lateness:

An absence may be excused if you have written proof that you could not attend class (e.g. note from your doctor). Notes must be given to me the week after you are absent (**not** at the end of the semester).

Other:

Do not use your phone in class for calls or text messages! If you use your phone during class, you will lose points. You may use the dictionary on your phone.

If you need to use the bathroom, please leave and return to the room quietly. Don't take too long.

Contacting me:

Mike Dixon

Office: D577

Email: dixonpufs@yahoo.com

Office hours: Monday 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; Tuesday 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; also by appointment.

If you wish to meet with me outside of class, please set up an appointment.

Translation made by Yahoo's Babelfish translator:

수필을 쓸 때 온라인 통역을 사용하는 것이 극단적으로 지혜가 없다. 이것은 몹시 온라인 통역이 한국어로 영국 절을 어떻게의 개조하는지 보기이다. 한국어를 영어로에서 번역은 더 나쁘다 조차.

(It is extremely unwise to use an online translator when writing essays. This is an example of how badly online translators convert an English paragraph to Korean. Translations from Korean to English are even worse.)

This is an example of single-spaced type. You should not use single-spaced type when printing your essays because it leaves no room for others to make comments on your work. In this course, all papers should used double-spaced type.

This is an example of double-spaced type. You should use double-spaced type when printing your essays because it leaves room for others to make comments on your work. In this course, all papers should used double-spaced type. You should also use Times New Roman typeface at a size of 12 points. This paragraph is written in 12-pt Times New Roman.

This is 14-point Times New Roman.

This is 12-point Times New Roman.

This is 12-point Arial.

All papers submitted for this class should use the following format style:

- Body text should be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman type.
- Top, bottom, left, and right margins should be 25 mm (1 inch).
- Write your name in Korean, your nickname, and your class ID number at the top of each paper. Also write the course and section number.

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The text in your essay should be 12-point Times New Roman typeface. This is the only font and size you should use for papers that you submit in this course. The style and formatting of your essays should look like this example. If they don't look like this example, then you're doing it incorrectly. Fix it before you submit it to me.

At the beginning of each new paragraph, you should indent the first line of type about 10mm. This makes it easier to see where the paragraphs begin and end. Text within the body of your essay should be double spaced. The blank line between each line of type provides room to make notes and corrections.

Do not skip an extra line between paragraphs. The indentation at the beginning of the paragraph is enough to make it clear where a new paragraph begins. You should not try to "pad" your paragraph with extra blank space in order to make it look longer than it really is.

Notice that the top, bottom, and side margins are 25mm. They are not 30mm; they are definitely not 40mm. The correct size of the margins is 25mm. (Two important facts: I have an excellent sense of spatial relationships and sizes, and I am not blind. I can easily judge the size of the margins.)

If you follow these formatting guidelines, it will indicate that you are smart enough to understand instructions and wise enough to follow the instructions given to you by the person who will ultimately assign your grade. If you do not follow these formatting guidelines, I will not accept your essays.

It is important to print out your work and carefully review it **before** trying to submit it to me. Give yourself enough time to deal with any printing problems you may encounter.