

Course Portfolio: **PAI103, English Composition** (Spring 2015)

Instructor: Dixon, Michael

Overview:

The overall purpose of the course is to improve students' English writing ability and enable them to produce easily-understandable sentences and paragraphs and to write well-organized short essays. Understanding advanced grammar concepts and logical organization of sentences are essential for effective writing.

Classroom lectures and writing exercises are aimed at improving students understanding of grammar. Completion of writing and analysis exercises in the textbook will improve student's understanding of proper paragraph structure.

Design:

The course covers two fundamental aspects of good writing: producing good sentences, and producing good paragraphs. Lessons in grammar are intended to improve students' ability to produce clear, understandable sentences; lessons about paragraphs are intended to improve students' ability to organize their ideas into effective paragraphs. The basic elements of an essay (introduction, body, conclusion) are also covered.

The initial lessons in the course are based on lectures, discussion, and use of basic aspects of English grammar. The following topics are covered:

Parts of speech: nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, etc.

Parts of a sentence: subject and predicate (verb and complement, including direct objects, indirect objects, object complements, predicate nominatives, predicate adjectives).

Modifiers and modifying phrases: appositives, prepositions, verbals (participles, gerunds, infinitives)

Clauses: independent and different types of dependent clauses (adjective, adverb, noun)

Proper use of punctuation (especially commas)

Proper use of capitalization

Proper formation and use of all verb tenses (simple, perfect, continuous, and the relationships between tenses)

After discussing each topic, students are given writing exercises in which they practice using the concepts covered, followed by peer review to check and discuss their understanding.

The textbook for the course is *Great Writing 2: Great Paragraphs, 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 (topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence) and the different types of paragraphs (definition, process, descriptive, opinion, and narrative). The textbook also introduces the fundamental parts of an essay, but writing complete essays is the focus of the second semester of the course (PAI106, English Composition 2).

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:

As noted earlier, lessons about grammar are followed by exercises in which students must use that point of grammar in writing several sentences. In the textbook, lessons include exercises analyzing paragraphs and, in some cases, writing sentences to complete paragraphs.

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

The students' first major assignment is a one-page narrative 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 the midterm exam and essay. The in-class exam requires students to examine ten sentences in order to identify and label modifying phrases and dependent clauses and to identify the parts of the sentence in the main clause (see in-class exam attached at the end of this portfolio). The format of the exam is explained and students practice the tested skills in the week prior to the midterm. The exam requires students to actively use the grammar concepts we have discussed and assesses their skill in doing so. The essay portion of the exam is a two-page essay (assigned two weeks before it must be submitted). Students must bring a rough draft of the essay to class in the week prior to midterms; 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 next major assignment is a 2.5-page essay using the types of paragraphs discussed in the course so far. Choosing a suitable topic is also emphasized. Students do brainstorming exercises to generate possible topics, then discuss their ideas to determine the best topic. Peer reviews also take place after the first page is 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 reinforce 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 last major assignment is the final essay and exam. The final essay is a 3-page essay produced through the method described in the previous paragraph: careful choice of topic and multiple rounds of peer review and revision. The in-class exam is a timed essay in which students are presented with a few possible topics, and each student must choose one and write a short essay in approximately 45 minutes. In preparation for the final exam, students do several practice essays in the weeks before the exam.

Results:

At the end of the course, the majority of students demonstrate an understanding of paragraph structure and basic essay structure. Most can produce a well-organized short 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 sentences; unfortunately, many students only show a small improvement in the quality of their sentences. This is primarily because of the varying levels of motivation among students and their varying levels of sustained, focused attention.

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 2: Great Paragraphs, Fourth Edition* by Keith Folse, April Muchmore-Vokoun, and Elena Vestri Solomon (Cengage Learning)

Grading:

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

Midterm and Final Exams:

There will be two exams during the semester. Each exam and essay will be worth 25% of your final score. Cheating on an exam will result in **failure** of the entire course.

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.

도쿄미] (Rachel) 13
20169876
PAI 103-01

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.

Student #: _____ Name: _____ Korean name: _____ ID: _____

Composition -- Midterm exam section _____

Place [brackets] around [**dependent clauses**] and (parentheses) around (**phrases**). Above each clause or phrase, write what type it is. Clauses: NOUN, ADJ, ADV. Phrases: PREP, PART, GER, INF, APP. Also, where appropriate, draw a line to the word which the clause or phrase modifies.

Identify the parts of the sentence for each main (**independent**) clause: S, V, PA, PN, DO, IO, OC.

Example: This sentence demonstrates what you should do in your answers.

1. I think the man in the hat lives in my building.

2. Before I lived in Busan, I had lived in Seoul for six months.

3. Her greatest desire is to live in Spain when she graduates from university.

4. His daughter, who studies medicine, is living in Montreal.

5. The teacher said that I should talk less and that I should study more.

6. I do not think it means what you think it means.

7. His wife, a successful writer, traveled with him to Spain.

8. The girl wearing the white dress told me she thinks I'm very cute.

9. What she wore to the party last night looked really nice.

10. I told you to listen very carefully to the instructions.