

ARTSSCI 1B03/Writing
McMaster University
Term 1, 2018-2019

Class:

Time: Monday 11:30-12:20pm, Wednesday 11:30-1:20pm
Location: BSB 120

Professor: Dr. James L. Sikkema
Office: UH 314A
Office Hour: Friday: 10:00 - 11:00
Email: sikkej@mcmaster.ca

Teaching Assistant: Barbara Ferguson (PhD student, Department of English & Cultural Studies)
Office: CNH 428
Office Hour: Mondays 1:30-2:30pm
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Course Description & Objectives:

This course introduces students to the basic elements of communicating ideas through language and the fundamental principles of good writing. The central purpose of the course is to cultivate an ability to express thoughts effectively and artfully through the written word. In order to accomplish this purpose, the course will incorporate some features of the philosophy of language, classical and contemporary rhetoric, basic rules of linguistic usage, and fundamental principles of composition. By the end of the course students will have become sensitive to the conceptual problems associated with the linguistic expression of thought, will become better readers of scholarly texts, and will become adept at expressing their thoughts through the written word.

Required Texts:

- Crider, Scott F. *The Office of Assertion: An Art of Rhetoric for the Academic Essay*. Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005.
- Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style, Illustrated*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Books are available in the Campus Bookstore.

Evaluation:

Reading Assignments - 25% (Weekly assignment)
Rules & Principles Assignments - 20% (Weekly assignment)

Rules & Principles Test - 20% (Wednesday, November 21 in class)
Essay Assignment - 15% (Wednesday, November 28)
Final Exam - 20% (TBD)

Note on Reading Assignments

Every Monday we will be performing an enquiry on a problem associated with the philosophy of language. Associated with that problem will be a short excerpt of a philosophical text giving expression to it. No more than a page in length (standard format), Reading Assignments should 1) identify and explain the central problem of the text, and 2) provide an explication of the main claims or the central argument of the text. You must bring a physical copy of your assignment with you to class on Monday to be submitted at the end of class.

Note on Rules & Principles Assignments and Test

Every Wednesday we will be going through a number of the basic rules of linguistic usage and fundamental principles of composition. These will be largely taken from *The Elements of Style*, so please be sure to *bring this text with you to every class*. You will be tasked with completing a writing assignment demonstrating the correct application of the rule, principle or device we will have investigated during class time. These will be completed in class wherein, upon completion, you will exchange your assignment with a peer for review. Peer reviews will be due for submission to the instructor the following Wednesday in class.

On November 21 there will be a final test on rules of usage, principles of composition and elements of rhetoric. The test will be composed of 2 parts: 1) multiple-choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank and 2) short answer.

Note on Essay Assignment

You will be tasked with writing an argumentative essay on Franz Kafka's short story "In the Penal Colony." The assignment itself will be delivered on Wednesday, November 14 and will be due two weeks later on Wednesday, November 28. Essays should be submitted in two ways: 1) a rough draft that you have printed and edited for revision, and 2) the revised final draft. Any submissions excluding either (1) or (2) will receive an automatic penalty of -25%.

Note on Final Exam

The final exam will be cumulative and will consist of 5 essay questions of which you will have to respond to 3. The date, time and location of the exam will be determined later in the term.

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions and Late Penalties

All extension requests must be communicated with the instructor at least one day prior to the due date of the assignment. Should you fail to perform such communication your assignment may not be protected from late penalties.

The late penalty for any assignment not submitted on time will be 2% per day. If you must use MSAF for any assignment please be sure to understand your responsibilities. You must send the instructor an email after using MSAF to work out an alternate date for you to complete the missed coursework. Any late submissions after that time will be subject to the stated late penalties.

As far as this instructor is concerned, the use of MSAF does not absolve you from completing the missed coursework. You must still complete the missed coursework. Should you fail to fulfil your responsibilities after submitting MSAF, and consequently fail to work out an alternate deadline with your instructor, you may be liable to receive no credit for the missed coursework.

McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity), located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. SAS can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO):

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous, or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office (i.e. to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office) normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Please Note:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L, and/or McMaster email. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites regularly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.

Course Schedule:

I: Introduction

Week 1

Wednesday 09/05: Introduction - Why Write?

Reading: Crider, *The Office of Assertion (OA)* - 1.1 - 1.9

Week 2

Monday 09/10: Enquiry 1 - Do words say what there is *really*?

Reading: Plato, *Cratylus*

Wednesday 09/12: Statements & Claims

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 2.1 - 2.6

*Mills Library Tour

II: Invention & Argumentation

Week 3

Monday 09/17: Enquiry 2 - Natural or artificial signs?

Reading: Reid, “Natural Language”

Wednesday 09/19: Arguments & Enthymemes

Reading: Crider, *OA* - Crider, *OA* - 2.7 - 2.11

Week 4

Monday 09/24: Enquiry 3 - How many words for how many things?

Reading: Locke, “General Terms”

Wednesday 09/26: Definition, Comparison, Relationship

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 2.11 - 2.15

Week 5

Monday 10/01: Enquiry 4 - Can we think without words?

Reading: Humboldt, “§9: Nature and Constitution of Language”

Wednesday 10/03: Analysis & Synthesis

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 2.16 - 2.20

Week 6

Monday 10/08: NO CLASS - MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Reading: NONE

Wednesday 10/10: NO CLASS - MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Reading: NONE

III: Organization & Method

Week 7

Monday 10/15: Enquiry 5 - Does language determine thought?

Reading: Sapir, “Language and Thought”

Wednesday 10/17: Immanent Design & Introductions

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 3.1 - 3.5

Week 8

Monday 10/22: Enquiry 6 - Is a private language possible?

Reading: Wittgenstein, "Philosophical Investigations"

Wednesday 10/24: Circumstances, Outlines, Arguments

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 3.6 - 3.10

Week 9

Monday 10/29: Enquiry 7 - Do words make sense? To what do they refer?

Reading: Frege, "Sense and Reference"

Wednesday 10/31: Conclusions & Coherence

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 3.11 - 3.16

IV: Composition & Style

Week 10

Monday 11/05: Enquiry 8 - What is the meaning of signs?

Reading: Saussure, "Semiotics"

Wednesday 11/07: Prose, Definitions, Diction

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 4.1 - 4.6

Week 11

Monday 11/12: Enquiry 9 - Is there a universal grammar?

Reading: Chomsky, "The Formal Nature of Language"

Wednesday 11/14: Coordinating Clauses & Conjunctions

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 4.7 - 4.12

Week 12

Monday 11/19: Enquiry 10 - Can language be oppressive?

Reading: Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks"

Wednesday 11/21: Parallelism

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 4.13 - 4.17

V: Revision & Assertion

Week 13

Monday 11/26: Enquiry 11 - Does language designate or describe gender?

Reading: Butler, “Performative Acts”

Wednesday 11/28: Drafts & Revisions

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 5.1 - 5.8

Week 14

Monday 12/03: Enquiry 12 - How free should we be to express ourselves?

Reading: MacKinnon, “Only Words”

Wednesday 12/05: Final Day of Class

Reading: Crider, *OA* - 6.1 - 6.4