

Academic Writing for Graduate Students

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Course Description:

This course offers a general introduction to academic writing. It focuses on analyzing texts, building effective arguments, and using evidence and secondary source material. How do we identify and analyze the main arguments of a text? What kind of responses can we offer to such arguments? How do we present our own thoughts, analysis, and arguments when writing a paper? How do we write literature review and theoretical background? What is the proper way to write bibliography and footnotes? This course addresses these and other questions. Through reading, writing assignments, discussion, and in-class exercises, students will develop writing and editing skills necessary for their success as graduate students.

Course Goal and Objectives:

- To help graduate students improve their skills in writing papers across a variety of disciplines and methods, as required in our program.
- To familiarize graduate students with the different genres of academic writing (e.g., seminar papers, response papers, presentations) and how these genres vary from discipline to discipline.
- To help graduate students become better writers by analyzing writing on both the micro (sentence) and macro (organizational) levels.
- To teach graduate students basic skills of professional editing so that they can become better editors of their own work and that of peers.
- To enable graduate students to apply these skills to a piece of their own writing and to the writing of peers.

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Understand the different genres of academic writing such as seminar papers, journal articles, literature reviews, bibliographies, etc.
- Structure their ideas to write clearer sentences and more cohesive paragraphs.
- Use an academic writing style characterized by precise, concise, and formal language.
- Critically evaluate their own writing, identifying common mistakes in their own texts.
- Recognize strengths and weaknesses in their own research and writing processes.
- Demonstrate the role of critical thinking and argumentation in scholarly writing.

Class Structure:

Lecture and seminar: 2 academic hour-lecture each week – one semester, 1 credit.

Teaching Method:

The course will be conducted through a combination of lectures, class discussion, and in-class exercises. The lectures will be based on regular reading and writing assignments.

Course Requirements and Assessment

- Attendance in the course is mandatory.
- Weekly reading assignments: Students are required to read the assigned chapters for every class and to prepare analyzing their strengths and weaknesses in class.
- Assignments: During the course, students will have to complete two assignments:
 1. Writing a bibliography and footnotes exercise.
 2. Writing a response paper.

Structure of Final Course Grade:

1. Participation	10%
2. Bibliography and footnotes exercise	30%
3. Response paper	<u>60%</u>
	100%

Textbook and Materials:

- John M. Swales & Christine Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, 3rd Edition: Essential Tasks and Skills (University of Michigan Press, 2012). [Hereafter: Swales & Feak]
- Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2009). [Hereafter: Belcher]

Class Schedule Layout:

Class 1 – Introduction to the Course (October 26, 2025)

- The class is designed to introduce the instructor and the course expectations, including attendance, class format, assignments, and grading system. The course syllabus will also be discussed.
- Some common ways to define academic writing.

Class 2 – Academic Writing: Audience, Purpose / Strategy and Organization (November 2, 2025)

- Characteristics of Academic Writing.
- Considerations in Academic Writing.
- Typical structures of academic papers (seminar, response paper, presentation).

- Writing strategies.
- Audience, purpose, organization.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 1-14.

** In-class exercise: Swales & Feak, Task 1, p. 2.

Class 3 – Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting & Citing (November 9, 2025)

- Finding and organizing primary and secondary sources.
- Avoiding plagiarism.
- References and quotations.
- Purpose of references and citation.
- Main reference systems (The Chicago Manual of Style / MLA).
- Writing footnotes/endnotes and bibliography.
- Comparison between bibliography and footnotes.

Required readings:

Academic Writing Guide, pp. 5-12.

Chicago Manual of Style (handout).

** In-class exercise: writing bibliography and footnotes.

Citation assignment is due November 23, 2025, by 12:00 pm.
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Class 4 – Academic Writing Style & Flow (November 16, 2025)

- Academic vocabulary.
- Lexical and grammatical choices.
- Sentence types.

- Clarity, coherence, cohesion, and correctness.
- Vocabulary, conciseness.
- Elements of formal style vs. informal style.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 14-54.

** In-class exercises: Swales & Feak, Task 9, p. 15; Task 14, pp. 26-27.

Class 5 – Avoiding Plagiarism: Overview & Paraphrasing (November 23, 2025)

- Some more notes on plagiarism: using AI.
- Effective paraphrasing, paraphrasing techniques.
- Synonyms.
- Identify the source.
- Summary reminder phrases - comparative summaries.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 188-210.

** In-class exercise: Swales & Feak, Task 3, p. 198; paraphrasing exercise.

Class 6 – Library Orientation (November 30, 2025) *This class will be held on Zoom*

- Basic acquaintance with the Nazarian Library's website, library reference services for graduate students, contacting the library.
- Using the library's catalog for locating books.
- Locating articles in English: EDS, specific databases in one's discipline (exposure only), Google Scholar.
- Visual History Archive (VHA): Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation.
- ProQuest database.

Class 7 – Summarizing and Literature Review I (December 7, 2025)

- Considerations before writing a summary.
- Effective use of quotation, paraphrase, and summary.
- Syntheses of more than one source.
- Organizing paragraphs, paragraph structure.
- Identifying and reading the related literature.
- Strategies for getting reading done.

Required readings:

- Swales & Feak, pp. 211-227.
- Belcher, pp. 139-150.

****** In-class exercises: Swales & Feak, Task 7, p. 213; Task 8, p. 214.

Class 8 – Summarizing and Literature Review II (December 14, 2025)

- Identifying your relationship to the related literature.
- How to organize information and identify research gaps?
- How to present the work's place within the academic field?
- Common mistakes in citing the literature.
- Writing a literature review.

Required readings:

- Belcher, pp. 150-170.

****** In-class exercises: writing outlines for a literature review.

December 21, 2025 – NO CLASS – Hannukah Holiday Break

Class 9 – Writing Critique: Response Paper I (December 28, 2025)

- Types of papers
- Guidelines for Writing Assignments
- Response Papers
- Types of Academic Writing
- Requirements for writing critiques
- Critical reading
- Writing critiques
- Reviews

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 228-276.

** In-class exercise: pair / group analysis of a sample response paper.

Class 10 – Writing Critique: Response Paper II (January 4, 2026)

- Response papers
- Book Reviews
- Second assignment instructions

Required readings:

Belcher, pp. 139-170.

** In-class exercise: pair / group analysis of a sample response paper.

Response paper assignment is due January 18, 2026, by 12:00 pm.

Class 11 – Constructing a Research Paper I: Format, Methods and Results (January 11, 2026)

- Overview of the research paper.

- Writing process (pre-writing, writing, re-writing).
- Drafting outlines.
- Research question.
- Paper focus: formulating a topic and paper's purposes.
- Formulating an argument.
- Writing up a methods section.
- Results /analysis.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 277-326.

Belcher, pp. 171-188.

** In-class exercise: Swales & Feak, Task 18, p. 322.

Class 12 – Constructing a Research Paper II: Introductions & Discussions (January 18, 2026)

- Introductions.
- Discussion, conclusion, and implications.
- Titles.
- Abstracts.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 327-378.

Academic Writing Guide, pp. 1-5.

** In-class exercise: writing introduction draft.

Class 13 – Editing and proofreading (January 25, 2026)

- Correct paper formatting.
- Grammar & mechanics.
- Macro and micro editing techniques for improving the structure of a text and its clarity.

- Editing and proofing.
- Students' Feedback on the Course.

Required readings:

Belcher, pp. 235-265.

** In-class exercise: editing introduction.

Week	Date	Subject	Reading Assignments	In-class exercises
1	October 26, 2025	Introduction to the Course	-	-
2	November 2, 2025	Academic Writing: Audience, Purpose / Strategy and Organization	S&F, pp. 1-14	S&F, Task 1, p. 2
3	November 9, 2025	Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting & Citing	Academic Writing Guide, pp. 5-12 Chicago Manual of Style (handout)	Writing bibliography and footnotes
4	November 16, 2025	Academic Writing style & flow	S&F, pp. 14-54	S&F, Task 9, p. 15; Task 14, pp. 26-27
5	November 23, 2025	Avoiding Plagiarism: Overview & Paraphrasing	S&F, pp. 188-210	S&F, Task 3, p. 198; paraphrasing exercise
6	November 30, 2025	Library orientation VIA ZOOM	-	-
7	December 7, 2025	Summarizing and literature review I	S&F, pp. 211-227 Belcher, pp. 139-150.	S&F, Task 7, p. 213; Task 8, p. 214
8	December 14, 2025	Summarizing and literature review II	Belcher, pp. 150-170.	Writing outlines for a literature review.
9	December 28, 2025	Writing Critique: Response Paper I	Swales & Feak, pp. 228-276.	Analyzing a sample response paper
10	January 4, 2026	Writing Critique: Response Paper II	Belcher, pp. 139-170.	Analyzing a sample response paper
11	January 11, 2026	Constructing a Research paper I: Format, Methods. and Results	S&F, pp. 277-326 Belcher, pp. 171-188	S&F, Task 18, p. 322
12	January 18, 2026	Constructing a Research Paper II: Introductions & Discussions	S&F, pp. 327-378 Academic Writing Guide, pp. 1-5	Writing introduction draft
13	January 25, 2026	Editing and Proofreading	Belcher, pp. 235-265	Editing introduction

**** This calendar is likely to change in order to accommodate learning needs.**