

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 three assignments:
 1. Writing a bibliography and footnotes exercise.
 2. Writing literature review.
 3. Writing a response paper.

Structure of Final Course Grade:

1. Participation	10%
2. Bibliography and footnotes exercise	20%
3. Literature review	30%
4. Response paper	<u>40%</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 (November 10, 2024)

- 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 17, 2024)

- 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 – Library Orientation (November 24, 2024)

- 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, Google Scholar.
- Visual History Archive (VHA): Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation.
- ProQuest database.

Class 4 – Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting & Citing (December 1, 2024)

- 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 December 15, 2024, by 12:00 pm.

Class 5 – Academic Writing Style & Flow (December 8, 2024)

- Lexical and grammatical choices and their discourse functions in academic writing.
- Transition words.

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

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 14-54.

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

Class 6 – Avoiding Plagiarism: Overview & Paraphrasing (December 15, 2024)

- Some more notes on plagiarism.
- Paraphrasing.
- 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.

Class 7 – Summarizing and Literature Review (December 22, 2024)

- Writing a literature review.
- Considerations before writing a summary.
- Effective use of quotation, paraphrase, and summary.
- Syntheses of more than one source.
- Showing similarities and differences.

Required readings:

- Swales & Feak, pp. 211-227.
- Belcher, pp. 139-170.

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

Literature review assignment is due January 5, 2025, by 12:00 pm.

December 29, 2024 – NO CLASS – Hannukah Holiday Break

Class 8 – Data Commentaries (January 5, 2025)

- Strength of claim.
- Structure of data commentary.
- Location element summaries.
- Language focus.
- Highlighting statements.
- Qualification and strength of claim.
- Organization.
- Concluding a commentary.
- Dealing with chronological data.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 139-187.

** In-class exercises: Swales & Feak, Task 4, p. 150; Task 10, p. 163.

Class 9 – Writing Critique: Response Paper (January 12, 2025)

- Requirement for writing critiques.
- Critical reading.
- Writing critiques.
- Reaction papers.
- Reviews.

Required readings:

Swales & Feak, pp. 228-276.

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

Response paper assignment is due January 26, 2024, by 12:00 pm.

Class 10 – Constructing a Research Paper I: Format, Methods and Results (January 19, 2025)

- 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 11 – Constructing a Research Paper II: Introductions & Discussions (January 26, 2025)

- 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 12 – Editing and proofreading (February 2, 2025)

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

Required readings:

Belcher, pp. 235-265.

** In-class exercise: editing introduction.

Week	Date	Subject	Reading Assignments	In-class exercises
1	November 10, 2024	Introduction to the Course		
2	November 17, 2024	Academic Writing: Audience, Purpose / Strategy and Organization	S&F, pp. 1-14	S&F, p. 2
3	November 24, 2024	Library orientation		
4	December 1, 2024	Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting & Citing	Academic Writing Guide, pp. 5-12 Chicago Manual of Style (handout)	Writing bibliography and footnotes
5	December 8, 2024	Academic Writing style & flow	S&F, pp. 14-54	S&F, Task 9, p. 15; Task 14, pp. 26-27
6	December 15, 2024	Avoiding Plagiarism: Overview & Paraphrasing	S&F, pp. 188-210	S&F, Task 3, p. 198
7	December 22, 2024	Summarizing and literature review	S&F, pp. 211-227 Belcher, pp. 139-170	S&F, Task 7, p. 213; Task 8, p. 214
8	January 5, 2025	Data Commentaries	S&F, pp. 139-187	S&F, Task 4, p. 150; Task 10, p. 163
9	January 12, 2025	Writing Critique: Response Paper	S&F, pp. 228-276	Analyzing a sample response paper
10	January 19, 2025	Constructing a Research paper I: Format, Methods. and Results	S&F, pp. 277-326 Belcher, pp. 171-188	S&F, Task 18, p. 322
11	January 26, 2025	Constructing a Research Paper II: Introductions & Discussions	S&F, pp. 327-378 Academic Writing Guide, pp. 1-5	Writing introduction draft
12	February 2, 2025	Editing and Proofreading	Belcher, pp. 235-265	Editing introduction

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