



## **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 11, 2026)**

- 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 (October 18, 2026)**

- 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 (October 25, 2026)**

- 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 8, 2026, by 12:00 pm. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|

**Class 4 – Academic Writing Style & Flow (November 1, 2026)**

- 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 8, 2026)**

- 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 15, 2026) \*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 (November 22, 2026)**

- 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 (November 29, 2026)**

- 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 6, 2026 – NO CLASS – Hannukah Holiday Break

**Class 9 – Writing Critique: Response Paper I (December 13, 2026)**

- 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 (December 20, 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 3, 2027, by 12:00 pm.

### **Class 11 – Constructing a Research Paper I: Format, Methods and Results (December 27, 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 3, 2027)**

- 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 10, 2027)**

- 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    | <b>October 11, 2026</b>  | Introduction to the Course                                      | -                                                                     | -                                          |
| 2    | <b>October 18, 2026</b>  | Academic Writing: Audience, Purpose / Strategy and Organization | S&F, pp. 1-14                                                         | S&F, Task 1, p. 2                          |
| 3    | <b>October 25, 2026</b>  | Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting & Citing                           | Academic Writing Guide, pp. 5-12<br>Chicago Manual of Style (handout) | Writing bibliography and footnotes         |
| 4    | <b>November 1, 2026</b>  | Academic Writing style & flow                                   | S&F, pp. 14-54                                                        | S&F, Task 9, p. 15; Task 14, pp. 26-27     |
| 5    | <b>November 8, 2026</b>  | Avoiding Plagiarism: Overview & Paraphrasing                    | S&F, pp. 188-210                                                      | S&F, Task 3, p. 198; paraphrasing exercise |
| 6    | <b>November 15, 2026</b> | Library orientation<br><b>VIA ZOOM</b>                          | -                                                                     | -                                          |
| 7    | <b>November 22, 2026</b> | Summarizing and literature review I                             | S&F, pp. 211-227<br>Belcher, pp. 139-150.                             | S&F, Task 7, p. 213; Task 8, p. 214        |
| 8    | <b>November 29, 2026</b> | Summarizing and literature review II                            | Belcher, pp. 150-170.                                                 | Writing outlines for a literature review.  |
| 9    | <b>December 13, 2026</b> | Writing Critique: Response Paper I                              | Swales & Feak, pp. 228-276.                                           | Analyzing a sample response paper          |
| 10   | <b>December 20, 2026</b> | Writing Critique: Response Paper II                             | Belcher, pp. 139-170.                                                 | Analyzing a sample response paper          |
| 11   | <b>December 27, 2026</b> | Constructing a Research paper I: Format, Methods. and Results   | S&F, pp. 277-326<br>Belcher, pp. 171-188                              | S&F, Task 18, p. 322                       |
| 12   | <b>January 3, 2026</b>   | Constructing a Research Paper II: Introductions & Discussions   | S&F, pp. 327-378<br>Academic Writing Guide, pp. 1-5                   | Writing introduction draft                 |
| 13   | <b>January 10, 2026</b>  | Editing and Proofreading                                        | Belcher, pp. 235-265                                                  | Editing introduction                       |

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