

The logo for English 9/10 is centered within a black rectangular border. It features a light yellow horizontal bar with the text "English 9/10" in a black, serif font. The bar is flanked by four red, curved, wing-like shapes pointing outwards.

English 9/10

Syllabus

1310 Trimpe

Tuesdays 1:20-3:50

Instructor: Donna Mearing

Contact: donna.mearing@wmich.edu

Phone: 269-353-1334

Office phone: 269-387-3230

IMPORTANT: Phone the office to let us know if you will miss class

Course description

The purpose of this course is to prepare you for college writing and to think analytically, creatively, and independently. This class fosters a workshop atmosphere with feedback from your peers that makes our class special in that *your* writing will be a major portion of the text. Class activities will focus not only upon reading, but also on the process of writing: planning, drafting, and editing. Your papers will see several stages: initial discovery draft, rough draft critiqued by peers, and a polished (publishable) draft. Each polished draft will be graded and then revised to go into your portfolio. The portfolios will showcase the best of your work. The only way to become a better writer is to write and to develop critical reading skills. As I become familiar with your writing, we will also focus upon individual goals for you.

During the **first half of the year**, students will work on several formal essays: narration, description, process analysis, exemplification, cause and effect, comparison/contrast, definition, argumentation, and researched argumentation. Students will study and respond to several literary essays from various authors, among them, E. B. White and Virginia Woolf. Students will also read short stories such as Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" and Marquez's "A Very Old Man With Wings". We will discuss and analyze Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Public speaking components will reflect our reading. Special attention will be paid to the study and understanding of logical fallacies. Students will keep a journal in which they write directed entries. We will write about and discuss aesthetics and philosophy—specifically applicable to art/artist/process. We have a website, accessible through goWMU, in which discussion over homework and other topics related to our class will be explored outside the classroom. Critical thinking skills, time-management, interpersonal, and metacognitive skills will be stressed throughout the course.

And for the **last half of the year**: Students will write two short literary essays for two novels. Students will develop ideas into a working thesis for their individual research paper topics. We will learn library research and Internet skills, proper MLA documentation, and in-text citation. We will continue to pay special attention to the study and understanding of logical fallacies. Our class will read Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* while keeping character diaries. We will discuss and explicate the text and students may also do individually researched presentations related to our reading. The final project will be a combination of fiction and poetry for a creative writing component. *Please understand that our schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*

The **Required texts and materials** for the course are:

- **Patterns for College Writing, 8th ed.* Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell (Instructor will provide)
- **Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner (Instructor will provide)
- *Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*
- *The detailed fallacies of logic found at the following website:
<http://www.entish.org/nizkor/>.
- *An in-class spiral writing notebook for daily in-class writing and notes
- *A 3-ring binder to keep as your portfolio (A collection of all drafts, outlines, submitted/returned papers, vocab, etc.)
- *A folder to keep homework journals

Policies and Requirements

I refer you to the standard *Rules and Responsibilities* memo that was mailed to you. To reiterate briefly:

Papers and homework: Due at the beginning of class. Late work is not acceptable.

Professionalism: This is your willingness to take part in class activities, help others, arrive to class on time, meet schedules for assignments, and basically contribute to the community of the class.

Weekly writing homework: Short 2-4 page papers and/or creative exercises will be assigned each week. Please use **1.5 spacing and 12 point Times Roman** (or similar) font. These will receive the following marks: + (excellent); √+ (Strong); √ (Fair); √- (Weak).

Journals: Do not confuse this work with your in-class writings and notes. Each week you will receive directed journal entries that should reflect **about 30 minutes** of work. **Single-spaced, 12 point Times Roman** (or similar) font. Keep your entries in a folder that you bring to class each week. I will collect the journals and comment on them several times throughout the year. We will use the check system detailed above.

Online discussions: These are not directed writing. They should be a reflection of the previous week's activities related to class and may include a response to other student's entries. One well-developed paragraph is sufficient.

Unit essays: At the conclusion of each unit, students will hand in a formal essay related to the technique or topic studied in that unit. These essays will be longer and more polished than the weekly writings and journals. **Double-spaced, 12 point Times Roman** (or similar) font. You will first receive an evaluation from among the following: weak, fair, strong, or excellent. All essays will be revised.

Essay formatting:

- *The essay must be accompanied by rough drafts
- *It must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides using left-justification only
- *It must be typed in 12 point font—*Times* is great, or a similar (un-bolded) font is fine
- *The essay must meet the minimum page length
- *The essay must have a clear thesis

Vocabulary: As you read (both for class and not), type a running log of unfamiliar words you encounter. **The list should contain the word, the definition, and the sentence you found it in.** Your list should have **at least ten words** per week. **Title** each list properly. For example: Vocab for Week #3. Note: Vocabulary (and logical fallacy homework) will only receive a \checkmark (complete) or a \checkmark^- (incomplete).

Grades

Grades are viewed by the instructor as a means of motivating and **challenging** students as well as an indication of mastery. Since the portfolios are made up of unit essays, I'll briefly describe how these essays will be graded. Each **essay** will be given a minimal grade (*Excellent, Strong, Fair, Weak*) based upon the particular areas of content, style, mechanics, and organization when you turn it in for its first evaluation, after which, it will be reconsidered as part of a holistic letter grade for the entire portfolio. These minimal grades will give you an idea of where each essay stands on its own. I understand that most of you will not be used to having words as grades and may feel a bit anxious about where you stand grade-wise at the beginning of the course. Fear not! I will contact you if your overall course grade approaches C level.

The journals and in-class writing will be graded primarily on *completeness* and *content*. I will be using the check system for these. I will look to see that all entries are present, and then I will evaluate how well you engage each directed subject. (Don't worry—free-writing is *free* writing. I will only check that you did it.)

Revisions for the portfolio: If your journal earns a \checkmark^+ or higher, then you will not be required to revise it. If your weekly writing earns a \checkmark^+ or higher, then you will not be required to revise it. **All essays must be revised**, even those with highest marks. If your vocabulary or logical fallacy assignments receive a mark lower than a \checkmark , then they must be revised. **All revisions must be accompanied by the original paper with your instructor's marks—otherwise, how can we tell any revision has been made?**

The requirements for the portfolio: All assignments, revisions, previously graded papers with my comments, and other class materials should be kept in your portfolio, unless otherwise noted. It is a good idea to put your work as it is handed back to you directly into its proper section in your portfolio. *Trying to organize this at the last minute will be quite a trial.* I will collect portfolios at the end of each semester so I can look at all of your work as a whole before assigning a course grade.

Grade calculation (after viewing portfolios): Roughly, unit essays (60%) weekly writing (15%) journals and online discussions (15%) participation and professionalism (10%)

Keep in mind that the learning experience that you gain should always remain more important than any particular word or letter grade.

Pep Talk

I am looking forward to working with each of you. Your classmates and I want your input and insight. Be sure to ask questions and contribute to class discussions and *listen* to your instructor, your classmates, and yourself. Think about what others are saying when they review your work so that you can consider other's counsel along with your own. And lastly, take some **risks**. Try new ways of approaching assignments. Explore. You will very likely surprise yourself. Good luck!