

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of Educational Administration

Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis 940: Writing for Diverse Audiences

**Unofficial Title: Advancing and Harnessing Ideas through Creative
and Disciplined Thinking and Language Competence**

Course Schedule:

Instructor: Prof. Clifton (Clif) Conrad (conrad@education.wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Monday, 1-4

Class Participants:

All graduate students who are interested in improving their writing skills, from master's students and newly-admitted doctoral students to individuals working on their dissertations, are welcome to enroll in this course. Students from other departments are welcome.

Purpose of Course:

The intent of this course is to advance the capacity of class participants to engage and communicate ideas, especially in papers and in theses and dissertations, with greater discipline, clarity, and grace. Several premises underpin the course: 1) that "good writing" is inextricably linked to/with "disciplined thinking" no less than language competence and, as such, can be fiercely demanding work; and 2) that all of us can become (much) better writers through both hard work and a willingness to embrace and learn from feedback. Class participants will variously work in groups and pairs throughout the course, both inside and outside-of-class. As working documents for use throughout the course, each class participant will bring one document to the first class: 1) workplace report; 2) paper for submission to scholarly journal; 3) course paper; 4) dissertation proposal; and 5) part of a dissertation.

Points of Departure: Quotations to Help Guide the Course

"Words are but the signs of ideas."

-- Samuel Johnson

"If any man wishes to write in a clear style, let him be first clear in his thoughts"

-- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"I do not belong to that fortunate class of authors who write constantly, quickly, easily, and always well, whose imaginations never tire and who-- unhampered by doubts or inhibitions--are by nature open to the world. . . . Whatever they touch, it is always exactly right. That I do not belong in such company, of course, bothers me and sometimes even upsets me: I am ambitious and I'm angry with myself for having so few ideas, for finding it so difficult to write, for having so little faith in myself, and for thinking so much about everything that I often feel crippled by it."

-- Vaclav Havel

"It is hell to write but heaven to have written."

-- Lord Chesterton

"The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think."

-- Edwin Schlossberg

Course Readings:

Becker, Howard S. (1986). Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lanham, Richard. (1987). Revising prose (4th ed.). New York: Longman.

Strunk, William, Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Williams, Joseph M. (2003). Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace (7th ed.). New York: Longman.

Course Expectations

In addition to the common readings required of all students as well as class participation, there are three course requirements (subject to modification at the beginning of the class):

1. Ongoing Revision of A Manuscript and Development of Rubrics

Each class participant—individually, in pairs, and in groups—will, throughout the term, revise a document in at least one of the following five genres: 1) workplace report; 2) paper for submission to scholarly journal; 3) course paper; 4) dissertation proposal; and 5) parts of dissertation. As such, the “lived experience” of actively writing and re-writing papers—informed throughout by feedback from others—will be at the heart of the course. Consonant with these ends, students in each of the five genres will develop “rubrics” (one to two-page) that define and explicate the meaning and key components of the respective genre. For example, students in the “scholarly journal” group will define its major features, such as the question(s) posed, audience, specific guidelines concerning method and findings and conclusion—in short, what constitutes a robust scholarly article. In so doing, class members will present a “guided tour” of the genre and present one or more breathtaking examples of the genre to the entire class. For each individual, both initial and revised (final revision) manuscripts will be presented to the entire class at the last class period.

2. Small Group Activities During Class

Group members will provide feedback to one another and, in turn, the class will discuss revisions (time permitting).

3. Journal

Each student will be expected to keep a "journal" or "log" in which they record their reactions (analyses, reflections, musings) to readings and writing-related assignments and activities and, insofar as possible, draw upon their journals in class discussions. These journals will be turned in on the last day of class and discussed with the entire class. To illustrate, you might organize your journal around a topic such as: What I have learned about how to enhance my writing, e.g. invite feedback, focus initially on problems and ideas, “just do it,” revise and revise, and so on.

Evaluation

For evaluation purposes, the criteria for evaluation will be weighted as follows: class participation (30%), Revision of Manuscript and Development of Rubrics (40%), small group activities (20%), and journal (10%)

Part One: Toward a Model—in Concert with a Problem-Driven, Recursive Model of the Writing Process—for Advancing and Harnessing Ideas through Creative and Disciplined Thinking and Language Competence

I. **Exercise:** Each class participant will discuss both their individual “writing process” (e.g., how they go about preparing and finalizing a draft) and the criteria they use to judge/evaluate “good writing.” Develop commonalities and differences across individuals.

II. **Exercise:** In-Class Critique of Draft Provided by Instructor (Students Identify Strengths and Weaknesses of the Draft)

III. **Class Discussion: Overall Challenges in Writing Well**

1. Non-Technical: Fear of Inadequacy, Fear of Feedback, Perfectionism, Finding One’s Voice, Unlearning
2. Imagination/Big Picture
3. Disciplined Thinker
4. Skills in Language Usage and Grace in Expression

IV. **Conrad’s Three-Phase Model for Advancing and Harnessing Ideas through Creative and Disciplined Thinking and Language Competence**

Phase 1: Architectural Phase: Addresses Problem(s) with Creativity and Harnesses a Driving Thesis/Question

Phase 2: Construction Phase: Skillfully Constructs/Connects Sections and Paragraphs

Phase 3: Finisher Phase: Constructs Syntax and Grammar with Clarity, Force, Grace

V. **Problem-Driven, Recursive Model of the Writing Process**

Class Participants Develop a Thesis in Response to a Challenging Question/Problem . . .
Write . . . Receive Feedback (Self and Others) . . . Re-Write

VI. **Joys of Writing**

Readings:

Becker, Howard S. (1986). Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lamott, Anne. (1994) “Shitty First Drafts.” In Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life. New York: Pantheon. (Handout)

Sommer, Robert F. (1989), “Overcoming Writing Anxiety: A Dilemma for Adult Learners.” In Teaching writing to adults. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Handout)

**Part Two: Applying A Model and Developing Teaching/Learning/
Assessment Strategies for the Course**

I. **Theme(s) of the Day: Feedback**

Readings:

Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 237-277. (Handout)

II. Theme(s) of the Day: Revision

Readings:

Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 121-166 (Handout)

III. **Exercise:** Students bring to class an example of Good/Bad/Ugly Prose. You may bring an example from a piece of your writing or a piece from a scholarly journal or a book or periodical. Please limit yourself to no more than one page and make copies for all members of the class. **PLEASE BRING TO CLASS** so we can discuss and critique during this second class period using Conrad's Three-Phase or other tools.

IV. Finalize Teaching &/ Learning/Assessment Strategies for the Course

Options to Consider: Invite faculty in the department to become involved and perhaps circulate drafts (including the instructor) or have class members write the same paper for different audiences and then present their work, and/or use writing circles.

Part Three

I. Theme: Organization

Readings:

Becker, Howard S. (1986). "One Right Way." Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 3
 Strunk, William, Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 15-17, 28-30
 Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 55-67. (Handout)

II. Theme: Voice

Readings:

Lanham, Richard. (1987). Revising prose (4th ed.). New York: Longman. Ch. 3
 Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 281-338. (Handout)
 Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 25-46. (Handout)

III. Theme: Clarity

Readings:

Williams, Joseph M. (2003). Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace (7th ed.). New York: Longman. Part Two (31-112)
 Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 7-24. (Handout)

- Strunk, William, Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 21-28
- Becker, Howard S. (1986). Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 2.

IV. **Theme: Grace**

Readings:

- Williams, Joseph M. (2003). Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace (7th ed.). New York: Longman. Part Three (113-181)
- Becker, Howard S. (1986). Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 5.
- Strunk, William, Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 72-79.

V. **Theme: Correctness, Grammar, Usage**

Readings:

- Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 167-175. (Handout)
- Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 49-54. (Handout)
- Strunk, William, Jr., & White, E.B. (2000). The elements of style (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 1-13.
- Lanham, Richard. (1987). Revising prose (4th ed.). New York: Longman. Chapter 1.
- Williams, Joseph M. (2003). Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace (7th ed.). New York: Longman. Pp.11-29.

Presentation of Manuscripts: Written and Oral Presentation

Presentation of Logs

Required Readings

- Lamott, Anne. (1994) "Shitty First Drafts." In Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life. New York: Pantheon.
- Sommer, Robert F. (1989). "Overcoming writing anxiety: A dilemma for adult learners." In Teaching writing to adults. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Pp. 16-31.
- Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 237-277.
- Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 121-145.
- Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 55-67.
- Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 281-338.
- Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 25-46.
- Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 7-24.
- Elbow, Peter. (1998). Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 167-175.
- Zinsser, William. (2001). On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction. (25th Anniversary Ed.). New York: Harper Collins. Pp. 49-54.

Quotations on Writing and Language

“Language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides.”
-- Rita Mae Brown

“You become writer by writing. It is a yoga.”
-- R.K. Narayan

“Words are things; and a small drop of ink / Falling like dew upon a thought, produces / That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.”
-- Lord Byron

“Easy reading is damned hard writing.”
-- Nathaniel Hawthorne

“The difference between the right word and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightning and the lightning bug.”
-- Mark Twain

"So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters, and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say. But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery."
-- Virginia Woolf

“He who thinks but cannot express what he thinks is at the level of he who cannot think.”
-- Winston Churchill

“You have to hold your audience in writing to the very end—much more than talking, when people have to be polite and listen to you.”
-- Brenda Ueland

“Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.”
-- Meister Eckhart

“But words are things, a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.”
-- Lord Byron

Please Note: I wish to fully include persons with disabilities in this course. Please let me know if you need any specific accommodations