

University Studies I03—Basic Writing Departmental Syllabus Spring 2009

University Studies is a bold, new approach to general education. Until now, general education utilized distribution requirements, which asked students to choose fairly randomly among a list of introductory courses in the humanities, social and natural sciences. Exposing students to a wide variety of subject matter and critical approaches was the primary objective of this educational tradition. Thus, little attention was paid to the ways students might synthesize or profit from the learning objectives and outcomes of different disciplines. As a result, students proceeded into their major studies with few identifiable skills and abilities gleaned from their general education experience. University Studies was conceived to redress these problems.

The rationale for an interdisciplinary approach to general education stems from the acknowledged complexities of the contemporary world. The problems facing modern humanity are rarely if ever understood using the perspectives and tools of a single discipline. Given that, University Studies maintains that critical thinking, logic, writing, humanistic and artistic inquiry, as well as the social and natural sciences are best understood via interdisciplinary methods. Indeed many interdisciplinary fields, such as African American Studies, Science and Technology Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies developed due to either the unwillingness or the inability of the traditional disciplines to address the issues posed in these bodies of scholarship.

All University Studies [UNST] courses are interdisciplinary. This means that they combine the intellectual methods and subject matter from a variety of disciplines in order to help students learn critical thinking and problem solving. UNST courses are interconnected in such a manner that they can guarantee that a student will be exposed to specified learning objectives that address real-life concerns. During the first year, students will learn skills for critical engagement; during the second and third years, students will apply these newly honed skills in theme-based courses; in the senior year, students will exercise the skills and knowledge they have gained in a capstone experience and service-learning activity. If undertaken seriously and with intentionality, UNST students can expect to emerge with a set of useful intellectual tools that will allow them to engage effectively a dynamic and complex world.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is absolutely essential. Cheating, plagiarism, sharing of clickers or other academic misconduct will not be tolerated. If you are caught cheating, you will not pass this course and will be subject to any and all penalties specified in the student honor code.

Attendance

University Studies strives to professionalize its students; therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in all UNST courses. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Absent or tardy students are responsible for

any missed class work, including any changes to the syllabus or assignments announced in class. In short, absences and tardiness can/will diminish your grade. If you suffer prolonged illness or misfortune, you should consider dropping the course. Persistent tardiness and failure to observe established classroom etiquette will lead to failure of the course. Student athletes must submit a schedule of days they will be absent within the first week of classes.

Students will automatically receive an “F” for missing beyond the equivalent of two weeks of class:

- M, W, F Schedule: Six (6) unexcused absences
- T, R Schedule: Four (4) unexcused absences
- 1-Class Per Week Schedule: Two (2) unexcused absences

At half the allotted absences (three (3) absences for M, W, F schedule; two (2) for T, R schedule; and one (1) for 1-class per week schedule), students are required to meet with their instructor(s) for a mandatory one-on-one conference concerning his/her performance in class.

Absence or tardiness is only excused for emergency situations. Students are responsible for submitting acceptable documentation for the excused absence within one week of the absence. Examples of acceptable documentation include:

- Written doctor’s note specifically requesting an excused absence (with the specific time and date on the notification)
- Obituary or service notice
- An official written summons to court

Educational Etiquette

Students will demonstrate collegial respect for their professors and peers. Any behavior that distracts (e.g. eating, talking while others are talking, etc.) or is disrespectful (inattention, personal attacks, studying for other courses during class, etc.) is unacceptable. Differences of opinion should be met with intellectual curiosity and rigor rather than insult, contumely, or discord.

All cell phones, pagers, and personal communication devices must be turned off for the duration of the class period. Bluetooth cell phones should be removed from the ear during class. Students who fail to comply with this rule will be asked to leave the class and will be marked absent. Campus security will be asked to escort those students from of the classroom who fail to leave as requested.

There will be no eating or drinking in class (other than bottled water.)

Student success in this course depends upon the development of scholarly and collegial habits. Active participation in class discussion and group work is mandatory. Collegial responsibility and respect are also compulsory.

Email Policy

Instructors will reply to student email within 48 hours, Monday through Friday. In order to insure a reply, students must use NCAT email accounts and include student name (no nicknames, please), course number and section in the subject line. All messages must be conveyed using standard English.

Turnitin.com

All written assignments in UNST courses will be turned in electronically via

Turnitin.com. Access to this web site will be given to you by the instructor.

Turnitin.com compares your writing with virtually every reference that exists on the internet as well as a bank of student papers that has been submitted from all over the world. Its purpose is to help students learn the difference between proper citation and quotation of other authors' work and plagiarism (copying others writing without citation.) Students who do not own a PC will submit their work via one of the computer labs on campus.

The URL for Turnitin.com is: <http://www.turnitin.com>

Create a user profile using the following information:

class ID:	2795588		
password	aggies		

Timely Submission of Work

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in your syllabus. **No late work will be accepted in any UNST courses.** Exceptions will be made only in cases of documented medical or family emergency or religious observance. Please notify your professor by email *before the assignment is due* should an acceptable absence occur. Employment, child care or other academic pressures do not constitute a valid excuse for late work. There is no provision for additional papers or extra credit to substitute for missed course requirements.

Disabilities and Differences

Students with documented learning disabilities or differences should identify themselves to their professor and present appropriate documentation during the first week of classes. No accommodations will be made later in the semester for students who do not self-identify at the beginning of the course.

Students who need developmental support should ask their professors for extra help or referral. All students should seek the support services of the Writing Center (A-309 GCB; 334-7764) and the Center for Student Success (312 Hodgin Hall; 334-7855).

Student-athletes (and other school group participants)

Students participating in school athletics are held to the same attendance and performance expectation as non-athletes. Hence, they should coordinate their course schedules so that team practices and games do not conflict with class meetings and group work. Student-

athletes should identify themselves to their instructors, submit a schedule of days you will miss class as well as the name and contact information for their coach within the first week of classes. The University Studies Department will follow the Department of Athletics Class attendance policy, which states:

1st Unexcused Absence: The student-athlete's coach will be notified.

2nd Unexcused Absence: Ms. Dee Todd, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics will be notified. The student athlete will be required to have a conference with Ms. Todd or her designee.

3rd Unexcused Absence: The student athlete will be suspended for one contest. If the student athlete is not currently in season, the suspension will apply to the following season.

4th Unexcused Absence: The student athlete's scholarship is subject to non-renewal.



103 Course Objectives. Students will:

1. demonstrate improved reading comprehension through regular writing assignments
2. demonstrate improvement in and application of grammar/mechanics
3. demonstrate vocabulary acquisition through writing
4. demonstrate improvement in basic rhetoric skills including thesis development, organization, and development of argument
5. use a portfolio to demonstrate proficiency in writing process including prewriting, drafting, writing, and editing essays

Class Materials:

- UNST 103. Custom edition. Pearson 2009.
- A 3 ring binder to put all of your materials in
- A two pocket folder to turn in essays with you name and section on outside
- Access to a computer to print out essays, complete research, etc.
- A highlighter
- stapler

Requirements:

Assignments

10% Summary (one paragraph)

10% Paragraph 1 (argumentative in nature based upon your readings - not a part of argument paper)

10% Paragraph 2 (argumentative in nature can be a "piece" of the argument 1 paper or completely separate)

15% Argument 1

25% Argument 2

30% HW -- Reading comprehension quizzes, annotations, etc

My writing lab – instructor discretion
My reading lab – instructor discretion
Criterion corrections – instructor discretion
Any in-class or out-of-class assignments as instructor sees fit

To pass a student must:

1. get at least 70% of all the possible points
2. pass Criterion with at least a minimum score of 4
3. meet attendance requirements
4. attend both required conferences
5. submit and pass final portfolio

Please note: At this time, this is a P/F class. A pass does not affect GPA. A fail does negatively affect GPA.

Criterion: Criterion is a computer based writing assessment that allows you to make an argument and receive instant feedback. It scores essays from 1-6, 6 being the highest score you can receive. You will 3 opportunities throughout the semester to write and earn a score of “4”. After you receive a 4, every essay that scores a 5 or 6 will earn bonus points toward your homework grade. A 5 will earn 5 points, and a 6 will earn 10. For example,

Test	Your score	Bonus
Criterion 1	2	0
Criterion 2	4	First one meets requirement. Now every 5 or 6 will earn bonus
Criterion 3	6	10

You would earn up to 20 bonus points toward homework.

The instructor may ask you to complete other Criterion assignments above and beyond the 3 listed on the syllabus. These will count directly to homework and DO NOT count for the minimum score 4 requirement. Further grammar corrections can be required for homework points but that is up to each, individual instructor.

Instructor: Chad Rohrbacher, Asst. Professor
Office: 109 Hines Hall
Office hours: 1-3 MWF & by appointment

Email: cmrohrba@ncat.edu
Phone: 256-2571
UNST 103: 1, 2 5

Course Overview

If there is no struggle, there is no progress.

Frederick Douglass (1817 - 1895)

This course is designed to prepare students for writing college-level compositions. The course begins with a focus on paragraph writing, requiring that students demonstrate their ability to develop and organize paragraphs adequately and clearly. In addition, the course concentrates on the short composition, requiring that students demonstrate competency in writing short essays. Computer-based tools such as Criterion may be used to address fundamental skills in student writing. The course will be offered for a Pass/Fail grade.

Course Structure: This class will focus on practice not on lecture. Your coach, piano instructor, or manager at work allowed you to practice the skills needed for you to succeed in those situations, and I am no different. This course will emphasize **your figuring things out using your own mind**, not memorizing what is in a textbook or regurgitating what I have said. Your future courses, indeed your career, will depend on your ability to think and think well.

On a typical day you will present information to the class, listen carefully, and be in small groups practicing disciplined thinking. You will be regularly responsible for evaluating your own work using specific criteria.

The “mortal sin” of this class is vague thinking. This thinking is obscure, nebulous, fuzzy, imprecise, confused, etc. Instead, by the end of the class I hope your thinking is clear, focused, specific, concrete, distinct, and exact in what you say and write.

Attendance and Participation: A couple of more notes on attendance and participation. Coming to any professor after an absence and asking “did I miss anything?” is both demeaning and frustrating. You are responsible for any of the material you missed; please get the information from another student in the class. I will be happy to answer specific questions you may have after you have gotten and reviewed the information.

Being unprepared for class will count as absence from class. Lack of participation may result in your being counted as absent as well. While you might be able to sit and stare and glean some information, the class will not be as beneficial as it could have been if you were prepared; thus, being unprepared will count as an absence.

Attentive and active participation is expected for each class. Some of the material covered in this class may challenge your assumptions and beliefs about the culture in which you live. You are expected to keep an open mind and you are expected to be respectful of others’ opinions. You will not be graded on your opinions, but rather on your ability to engage the material in a thoughtful and precise manner, and in your ability to construct academically sound arguments based on the materials we cover.

Some tips on having a good discussion:

- 1) Be prepared for class by reading and thinking before class starts.
- 2) Divorce yourself emotionally from a statement or point of view. If you discuss a statement, make sure you are focused on the assumption or the logic and not the person. If your statement is being discussed, do not take it personally. Listen, think, evaluate, and respond with another reasoned statement.
- 3) Show synthesis. Bring two ideas together to show insight and develop new ideas.
- 4) Show awareness of sources and proof. Websites are not very good sources, usually.
- 5) Read outside of class. Listen to public radio. Read newspapers and magazines. Gather information that makes you more interesting and valuable.
- 6) Demand proof of everyone including yourself (and me).

Participation normally means thoughtful and significant contributions to class discussions. However, I do recognize that students may sometimes participate without vocal contribution or may “talk” a lot in class but add little in the way of ideas or insightful questions. Participation is not based upon “air-time”, but the meaningful contribution to the class, the questions asked, and the process we engage in to find answers to those questions.

Conferences: Two conferences are required. More conferences are highly suggested.

Email Etiquette

Email is a great tool that can be unreliable at times. Because it is unreliable, I am not responsible for lost, misdirected, etc. email. I will usually respond within 24 hours; however, if I do not respond, you should follow up in person.

I am your professor, and as such I expect you to present all writing in at least a semi-polished form, and never is this more of a problem than when I receive random, confusing emails from students.

I simply **do not reply to emails** that don't at least attempt some form of fluid communication and that don't contain an awareness of class policies/schedules/etc. The syllabus is like 100 pages long for a reason – I try to put everything you might need to know in there. Please take a look prior to emailing me with a question like, “When are your office hours?”

Learning how to craft an intelligent, formalized email to a professor is a skill within itself, and I'm here to help you learn the ins and outs of such writing. To that end:

Please Make Sure Your Email:

- Contains a specific subject heading,
- Addresses me formally (just put a “Mr. Rohrbacher”, a "Dear Chad," a "Hi Professor," or a "What up, Big Slick" at the beginning and you're fine),
- Explain who you are and which class and section you attend,
- Remember your audience and attempt to adhere to correct spelling and grammar conventions (I'm not saying you have to reinvent the semi colon, but if you write

me an email that's in super-instant-message code or something that contains no capitals and no vowels, I'll be all "uh"? And that's never good for you),

- Be aware of class timetables (do NOT email me about a due date if it's on a syllabus or assignment sheet somewhere),
- Does not ask me to do your work for you in any way, shape or form,
- Does not demand a quick response (sometimes I'm away from email for days on end, so don't email me questions that immediately need answered),
- Formally concludes ("Thanks," or "Later," or "Peace out, yo," will do fine).

Again, a common complaint I hear from professors across campus is the lack of audience awareness and attention to professional email conventions by students. Please feel free to use these tips for all your classes.

Adapted from S. Edgehouse

Finally: You are cordially invited to drop in on me for just a friendly chat anytime. We could also meet at the Union over lunch or something, as my office/cubicle is usually cluttered with papers, books, and personal writing so sometimes finding a place to sit can be a challenge. Poetry, music, tv, film, football, poker, and politics are some of my interests, so I will always be amendable to exploring those with you. Of course, one of the joys of teaching is learning about things from you, so feel free to drop by and enlighten me. Seriously.

FAQ

Q: Are page lengths really that important? Isn't it important to write in organic length?

A: Yes, organic length is important. You don't want to ramble on if you've already fully developed your points and everything else. The choice of topics, subjects, audiences, strategies chosen, and other factors will alter the length of an essay. Your job is to structure an essay to make it fit the length of the assignment. One thing to keep in mind is when topics are made more specific, it's usually easier to write more about them. Of course, succinctness is an art in itself and I don't want you to go over the page limit either. Remember, topics are *not* all the same. You must remain in the page requirements to pass these essays.

Q: I was always taught to use the "Five Paragraph Theme" in high school, but here I got a No Pass because I organized my essay this way. Why?

A: The "Five Paragraph Theme" is a good tool for teachers to show, basically, that essays need to be organized (introduction paragraph, a paragraph for each main point of support, and a conclusion paragraph). However, this is college, and a new level of complexity of argument and maturity of thought is required. You should be able to divide your ideas and develop on them more fully. If you check out published essays, you'll find very few (if any) five paragraph themes.

Q: I was always told I was a good writer in high school and now I'm struggling to pass my essays. How can this be possible?

A: There may be many reasons, including the simple possibility that you wrote better essays than you are writing now. However, the more likely reason is that NCATSU's Writing Program has a slightly different set of standards than your high school did (more challenging perhaps). For instance, maybe your high school really focused on grammar, but didn't worry too much if you thought critically or organized an essay logically. Or perhaps your high school made you write a lot of reports, but didn't focus too much on argument. There are many possibilities of difference. Remember, if you ever want to discuss an essay, I am available.

Q: I don't think I deserve an "F" on this essay.

A: Having a weakness that is problematic enough in any area of the rubric will earn a No Pass for that essay. That doesn't mean it's "failing," especially in the way we traditionally think of failing in classes. In other words, an NP essay might not earn an "F," even by our own standards. We simply want essays to be competent in all areas before we pass them; however, if you disagree or are confused by a grade, I'd be happy to talk with you about it. Please keep in mind that I ask that you take one day to look over an essay and see what I have written before seeing me about it.

Q: Why don't you just tell me everything I need to do?

A: This is college. Here is an opportunity for you to take ownership of your own education, use and develop your own mind, and work on your weaknesses thus becoming a stronger individual. Being able to merely follow directions without understanding why something is done or how to complete something on one's own are not qualities that will always serve you well. Thus, you will find I will ask a lot of questions to get you to think about the essay and your writing in different ways while offering some guidance and some specific suggestions; I will never, however, write the essay for you. Of course, the more questions you ask, the better I can assist you.

Q: How come you didn't tell me to fix this in the rough draft/first draft that you read/graded?

A: I actually might have told you, but perhaps not in that particular place in the paper which has the problem. Look over my comments for the whole paper and check over the rubric. For instance, if I tell you in my comments or in the rubric that you need to work on organization, that doesn't mean fix only the poor transitions that I have marked in the paper; that means fix *all* the weak transitions.

If an essay has fundamental problems in some area that will certainly fail it, I might focus exclusively on those problems in a draft. For instance, if you give me a draft without a thesis, what's the point of my talking about poor transitions--there is no argument to move along anyway. Along those lines, you may have one problem in a draft and through revision a different problem becomes apparent. Don't worry, writing is a process and that is part of the process. The better your drafts, the more specific my criticisms can be and, more than likely, the better your final drafts will be.

Grammar and Mechanics Worksheet

Each essay should be corrected for grammar and mechanics within one week of being returned to you. These are worth 20 points each (Summary 1, Summary 2, Argument, and Reflection) for a total of 80 points toward homework.

1. On the graded essay, please correct any grammar mistakes that are marked. Please do this by a) placing the correct punctuation directly above the marked error and b) finding the corresponding rule in the Pathways book and c) writing the page you found the rule on above it.
2. Do NOT reprint the essay with typed corrections.
3. Do NOT put section numbers or chapters from the handbook or Vague Categories (It's a comma error, for example); instead put the specific rule and page number.
4. Thus put corrections directly on the graded essay and only correct grammar/mechanics (do not correct development, organization, or audience issues except in full revisions).
5. This should happen on drafts and on final revisions.
6. An example is below.

They're cookies tasted like birdseed and marshmallows. (I put an X on the line and define the error: sp)

Students cross out "They're" put "Their" and write "spelling / possessive error" and the page number above it.

Their cookies taste like bird seed, they are bits of chunky nastiness. (I put X on the line and define the error: cs)

Students cross out the comma, put a period and capitalize "They". They then write the rule "two complete thoughts can not be separated by a comma" and the page number above it.

If there is not enough room to write the rule, students must clearly identify the error and write the rule either on the bottom or on the back. For example, students might number the error and write the rule with the corresponding number on the back.

Over the course of the semester you will be required to read and annotate essays. This is the deliberate process of reading, comprehending, thinking, and questioning the material. You will be reading more on how to complete this process in the first couple of weeks of the semester.

You will be asked to

1. Identify and highlight the thesis and the main points of the essay.
2. Circle and define any unknown words, references, people, etc.
3. React to the text. Comment, question, make connections to other writers, pop culture, etc in the margins.

These are worth 15 points each and there will be 10 over the course of the semester for 150 points total. A sample rubric, what I will be looking for, is below.

Name:

/15

Points

Essay being annotated:

Annotation RUBRIC

Requirements	5	4	3	2	0
Main Points	All main points are highlighted (5)	Most main points are covered (4)	About half of the main points are covered (3)	Few of the main points are covered (2)	Should review to better understand essay (0)
Reaction to text	Author fully reacts to text in margins by questioning, analyzing, and/or drawing connections (5)	Author mostly reacts to text in margins by questioning, analyzing, and/or drawing connections (4)	Author somewhat reacts to text in margins by questioning, analyzing, and/or drawing connections (3)	Author reacts to text in margins very little (2)	Does not react to text in any meaningful way (0)

Unknown words and references quiz:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Tentative schedule – this may change, so please attend class regularly for any updates.

Tentative Fall UNST 103

Rohrbacher

Important Dates

Assignment	Draft	Final
Summary	9/3	9/10
Paragraph 1	9/15	9/22
Paragraph 2	9/24	10/1
Argument 1	10/8	10/22
Argument 2	11/5	11/12

Criterion Testing

August 24, 25 (M T)

Oct 15, 16 (TH F)

December 1, 2 (T W)

Pretest 2nd day of class

Post test last day of class

Writer's lab will be coming for 15-20 minute presentation sometime during 9-7 to 9-11
TBA

September 27-29 external reviewers will be in town

Only Argument 1 draft and final and Argument 2 draft and final need to be on TurnItIn

This is a sample T TH schedule – you have freedom to do as you wish

Pages = book

OL = Blackboard course documents

All reading assignments includes annotating the text

Date	In-Class	Due Next Period
8-18	Introductions Basic Essay Introduction	Read syllabus; come with questions Read "What corporations can't build: a sentence" OL

		Critical Thinking 1-11
8-20	Discuss Syllabus Pretest (30 minutes) Discuss article Discuss Criterion	Sign up for Criterion (instructions OL as both a document and a video) Sign up for Turnitin (instructions OL as both a document and a video) Timed Writing 329-336
	Last Day to Add 8-21	
8-25	Criterion Make sure criterion and turnitin are complete	Read “Visual Literacy” OL apply critical reading techniques from previous HW Read Critical reading 23-31; 33-39
8-27	Annotation Quiz / review rubric Review and discuss Visual Literacy Begin Summary	Read “Summary” 648-55 Write 4-6 sentence summary on Visual Literacy Read “Young Women Learn”
9-1	Collect summary – review in class Collect annotations Vis. Lit Think/Pair/share Young Women	Write 4-6 sentence summary of Young women – This is summary draft
9-3	Summary Draft Due	Read “Reality TV Encourages Racial Stereotyping“ OL Write a paragraph agreeing/disagreeing using your experience current programming Criterion 1 corrections due Monday
9-8	Discuss Paragraph	Revise summary
9-10	Summary Due	Read “Reality TV and Humiliation” Paragraphs 41-55 Write paragraph on TBA

9-15	Paragraph 1 Draft Due	Define 220-234 Write Paragraph 1 Draft – defining term
9-17		Essays Building Blocks 59-74
9-22	Draft Paragraph 1 Due	Write Paragraph 2
9-24	Criterion 2 Paragraph 2 Draft Due	
9-29		76-92 Prewriting and drafting Revise Paragraph 2
10-1	Introductions/Conclusion Paragraph 2 due	93-97 revise and edit Criterion 2 Corrections Due T
10-6	Thesis, TS, Development	Organization Unity Outline 111-124
10-8	Grade sample argument	97-109 sample essay Other samples available OL Draft Argument 1
10-13	Draft Argument 1 Due	TAP 299-317
10-15	Criterion 3	
10-20	Fall Break	
10-22		

10-27	Argument 1 Due	Criterion 3 Corrections due TH
10-29		
	Homecoming	
11-3		
11-5	Argument 2 draft	
11-10		
11-12	Argument 2 Due	
11-17	Return Argument 2 start on revision of argument 1 or 2	
11-19		
11-24	Final Revision Due Post Test	
11-26	Thanksgiving	
12-1	Criterion	
12-3	Last Day – Portfolios Due	