

**Sample Syllabus**  
**ESL116G**  
**Composition in the Academic Disciplines**

Instructor:  
Email:  
Phone:  
Office:  
Office hours:

*Required Texts:*

Swales, J. M. and Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

ISBN: 978-0-472-03475-8 (available in the bookstore)

Caplan, N. (2012). *Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-03501-4 (available in the bookstore)

Additional texts will be distributed on the course website.

*Course Description:*

This course is designed for upper-intermediate and advanced level international graduate students. Its aim is to help you to become more competent, confident and critical members of your chosen discourse communities by developing your abilities to successfully write some of the key genres of these communities.

*Course Objectives:*

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Draw upon a deeper awareness of how writers use language to create meaning, show their own opinions, manage relationships with readers, and control the organization and development of a text
- Use a variety of strategies and tools to analyze the key features (i.e. audience and purpose, organization and structure, information flow, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) of research articles in your field of study and apply this information to your own writing
- Expand your academic vocabulary by learning common academic words, formulaic sequences, and collocations and analyzing how they are used in your field of study
- Display improved control of written English grammar appropriate to your field of study
- Develop your ability to use a combination of modes, including writing, visuals, and speaking to communicate your academic work to a general academic audience

*Course Requirements:*

*Regular attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. The class functions as a workshop, not a lecture course. Under PSU policies, you may miss 2 classes without any additional penalties beyond the missed work. Every additional absence will result in a 3% reduction in your final grade. If you know ahead of time that you must miss more than 2 classes, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your options. Additionally, if you must miss class unexpectedly due to an illness or other emergency, please email me as soon as possible to let me know.

*Active participation:* You are expected to participate actively in every class. In this course, active participation includes:

- being prepared for each class by bringing the required textbook and any homework;
- completing all in-class activities and assignments critically and thoughtfully;
- contributing to both small group and whole-class discussions by commenting and/or asking questions.

If you begin to show a pattern of low participation in class, I will contact you and we will discuss how you can participate more actively. If your participation in the class does not improve after this discussion and remains consistently low, your final grade will be reduced by up to one letter grade.

*Homework Practice (30%)*

You will have regular and frequent short homework assignments. These assignments are designed to give you lots of small-scale practice with a wide variety of techniques, strategies, grammar points, and language keys. They will also help to prepare you for the class activities. Homework assignments will not be marked in detail but will earn points for completion. I will use a 3-point scale:

[0=Did not turn in/turned in late]

**1**=Partially completed/fails to meet basic requirements

**2**=Completed and meets basic requirements

**3**=Completed with impressive depth and thoughtfulness

Your two lowest homework grades will be dropped.

*Short Writing Assignments (30%)*

As part of the class, we will be focusing on several important genres of academic writing. The final list of the genres we will study will be determined in the first week of class based on the needs of all the students. Possible genres include:

- Conference proposals
- Research proposals (including dissertation proposals)
- Book reviews
- Literature reviews
- Data commentaries
- Seminar papers
- Various sections of research articles

You will be asked to write short versions of our focus genres using content from your field of study.

### *Major Writing Assignment (30%)*

In addition to the short writing assignments that everyone completes, you will be asked to identify one important piece of writing you need to complete in your own program of study. You will then research, plan, draft, and edit this piece of writing, or a section of it, as your major writing assignment for this class.

### *Poster Presentation (10%)*

As a final project, you will be asked to give an oral presentation focusing briefly on the content of your major writing assignment and largely upon your own development as a writer, based on what you have learned and practiced in this class.

The presentation will be timed (up to 10 minutes) and should be practiced at home. The last two days of the semester will be devoted to posters.

## **PSU Policies**

### **Enrollment & Withdrawal**

You are responsible for making all decisions regarding your enrollment status in and any Financial Holds for Penn State courses. Should you decide to withdraw from this course, you must either (1) drop via e-Lion or (2) complete an official “add/drop” form and submit it to your advisor by University deadlines. If you are failing the course and do not officially withdraw, you will receive a final grade of F. Please talk to me if you have any questions about this process.

### **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using someone else’s words, ideas, and/or data in your work and treating it as your own by either not citing it or by citing it inappropriately. Plagiarism is a very serious issue in the American university system. Within Penn State, the College of Liberal Arts has the following policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism: “Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.” [http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Deans\\_Area/Preparingyoursyllabus.shtml](http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Deans_Area/Preparingyoursyllabus.shtml) Questions about academic integrity can be referred to Ashley Tarbet at [aet143@psu.edu](mailto:aet143@psu.edu) or (814) 865-1070.

### **Disability Access Statement**

“The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people

shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.”

[http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Deans\\_Area/Preparingyoursyllabus.shtml](http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Deans_Area/Preparingyoursyllabus.shtml)

Questions about disability access can be referred to Jennifer Morris at [jxm2@psu.edu](mailto:jxm2@psu.edu) or (814) 863-5538.

**Statement of Nondiscrimination**

“The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state of federal authorities. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.” <http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/syllabus/policy>

## ESL116G: Sample Schedule of Assignments (Spring semester)

The semester is divided into four sections:

### **Part ONE: January 12 – February 2**

*What is academic writing and how can we study it?*

Collect articles to make your personal corpus

Interview a senior member of your discipline

Complete a variety of short exercises on style, word choice, common reporting verbs, rhetorical moves

### **Part TWO: February 4 – March 6**

*What genres of text are included in academic writing?*

Analyze several textual genres

Complete several brief writing exercises to illustrate important genres

### **Part THREE: March 16 – April 17**

*What does academic writing look like in your specific field?*

Analyze successful texts from your field

Complete a variety of short exercises on style, rhetorical choices, and grammar patterns common to your field

Draft an original piece of academic writing

Discuss your rhetorical choices

### **Part FOUR: April 20 – May 1**

*In what ways can you reflect upon and demonstrate improved control over the conventions of academic writing in English? What is your plan for future professional development?*

Present a reflective visual/oral display of your own progress towards control of academic genres, moves, and style

Critique classmates' presentations

Sample course calendar  
SF=*Swales & Feak*

GC=*Grammar Choices*

WEEK/D ATE	FOCUS	TOPICS	HW
<b>Part ONE:</b>	<b><i>What is academic writing and how can we study it?</i></b>	<b><i>Text types Grammar awareness Register</i></b>	Pre-class: Interview a professor in your field; download articles
<b>1</b>	Structure & function of texts	Introduction & writing sample: <i>Describe &amp; explain a current controversy in your field</i> Text structure & function (SF Task5-6, p8-10)	SF: Task 14, p26 analyze one of your articles using chart on p27
	Grammar serves meaning	SF: Unit 2, Tasks 11-13,p78- 81 GC: p48, ex2	GC: Unit 7, p132ff: create account in COCA, do ex. 1- 7 (select)
<b>2</b>	Information structure in English	GC: Unit 8, ex1-2, p148-153 Information structure in academic English SF: Unit 1, Task 17, p33 DEFINITIONS	GC: p62, use one of your downloaded articles to answer the grammar questions
	Register and lexical choice	SF: Unit 2 p67 task 5 p70 task 6 p79	<b>SWA#1 An extended definition</b> (cf SF: p82 task 14) <b>DUE:</b>
<b>3</b>	Grammar serves meaning	SF: Unit 3, Task 1, p101 GC: Passive voice, p78-81 Adverbs position, p36-37 SF: Task 8, p117: -ing clauses	SF: p132, Task 15
	Text functions found within academic research articles	PROBLEM-SOLUTION texts PROCESS texts	<b>SWA#2 Problem- solution OR Process description text</b> <b>DUE:</b> SF: p133: Task 17

<b>Part TWO:</b>	<b>What genres of text are included in academic writing?</b>	<b>Short Writing Assignments</b> <b>Critiques</b> <b>Book Reviews</b> <b>Brief Notes</b> <b>Conference Proposals</b> <b>Letters of inquiry</b>	Short Writing Assignments (SWA)
<b>4</b>	Critical review and response	CRITIQUE Textbook exercises Discussion	
	Proposals and inquiries	LETTER OF INQUIRY/CONFERENCE PROPOSAL Textbook exercises Discussion	<b>SWA#3:</b> Critique an article in your field
<b>5</b>	Data commentaries	DATA COMMENTARY TASKS Textbook exercises Discussion	
	Review of tasks	Textbook exercises Discussion	<b>SWA#4:</b> Write a data commentary on some data that you have NOT written about before
<b>6</b>	Writing a Methods section of a research paper	METHODS SECTION Textbook exercises Discussion	
		ABSTRACTS Textbook exercises Discussion	<b>SWA#5:</b> Write an abstract for a paper or article that you plan to write
	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Part THREE:</b>	<b>What does academic writing look like in specific fields?</b>	<b>Analyzing published texts</b> <b>Preparing a research article</b> <b>Identifying rhetorical “moves” and choices</b> <b>Grammatical choices</b>	
<b>7</b>	Discipline-specific moves	Textbook exercises Discussion	<b>SWA#6:</b> Write a methods section for a research project you are working on
		Textbook exercises Discussion	

<b>8</b>		Textbook exercises Discussion	
	Library research training	<b>LIBRARY Research Training.</b>	
<b>9</b>	Grammar in academic writing	Grammar review In-class discussion Peer review	
		Grammar review In-class discussion Peer review	
<b>10</b>		Grammar review In-class discussion Peer review	
		<b>First draft individual conferences on research paper</b>	
<b>11</b>	Oral presentation and PowerPoint slides	Presentation tips from expert presenters See <a href="http://www.garreynolds.com/preso-tips/">http://www.garreynolds.com/preso-tips/</a> for suggestions	
<b>12</b>			
<b>Part FOUR:</b>	<b><i>How has your mastery of the conventions of written English improved?</i></b>	<b><i>Reflection Oral presentation “Exploded” research paper poster</i></b>	
<b>13</b>	Individual writing conferences	<b>Final draft conferences</b>	
<b>12/3</b>			
<b>12/5</b>		<b>Final draft conferences</b>	
<b>14</b>	Final presentations	Poster session (oral presentations)	
<b>12/10</b>			
<b>12/12</b>		Poster session (oral presentations)	
<b>15</b>		Final written project due by midnight; BOTH hard copy and electronic copy required	
<b>12/16 (M)</b>			