Good writing makes writing seem easy. It is compelling, purposeful, articulate. It is often the result of a plan, a formula, but it never feels formulaic. It clarifies and elucidates, shining a light onto an issue or idea that was previously shadowed; it draws connections between that which the reader already understands and that which the writer is communicating.

A good writer knows that if she is to draw these connections meaningfully, she must know her audience. She must intuit their values, anticipate their objections, and know which allusions will resonate with them and which sources they will find credible. She must use this information effortlessly, naturally to guide the way she expresses her idea, how she couches it.

A good writer knows that using a wide variety of source material is impressive, not only because it makes him (and his writing) appear smart, but also because it makes him (and his writing) appear sophisticated. A good writer is like the interesting guy at the party, the one who can draw connections among the most disparate sources...everything from Hamlet to Homer Simpson to the article he read yesterday in the Huffington Post. Both the good writer and the party wit add to the conversation and are disappointed when witless and unfashionable only affirm their ideas with a “Yeah, you right” or worse, “Cool,” and so they never insult other good writers with such empty praise. Instead, they question, probe, and even challenge (although politely) others’ ideas, for they know that doing so is the highest compliment.

Good writers read. A lot. They read not only to add to their repertoire of knowledge, but also to learn style and flair. They read as writers, always looking for that perfect sentence or lovely turn of phrase. They read to see how other good writers interweave their ideas within a context of larger ideas; they take note of how other good writers integrate the ideas of others, of how they employ rhetorical strategies, of how they use words and craft sentences and build paragraphs and organize essays. They take note of the conventions that govern the various genres in which which they write. Good writers ask questions about what they read and they search for answers.

Good writers write. Whether it is an assignment for the New York Times or a Facebook status update, good writers consider their purpose and their audience; they carefully choose their words; they mindfully construct their sentences. Good writers write as writers, ever conscious that their ideas and their ability to express them is not a gift, but a practice that must be nurtured and cultivated. And good writers know that the only way to nurture and cultivate a practice is to, well, practice.

This course aims to help you become a good writer.
Over the next fifteen weeks, you will practice writing. Specifically, you’ll produce two projects comprised of formal reflections, an annotated bibliography, a proposal, short compositions (SCs) and long compositions (LCs). To ensure that your projects are successful, you’ll research, read, draft, reflect, and revise; all of these preparatory tasks are called process work (PW). The course will culminate in a presentation of one of your projects (or an arm of it) in a public forum (more on that later).

Projects will graded on a 100 point (A-F scale, whereas an A=90-100, B=80-89, and so on). Your more successful project (probably ProjectTWO) will account for 55% of your grade; your less successful project (probably ProjectONE) will account for 40% of your grade. The remaining 5% of your final course grade will be your final presentation grade.

This should go without saying, but you must submit all the assignments required for this course in order to earn a final course grade higher than F. Use this space to keep track of your grades:

_______ ProjectONE 40%

_______ Short Comp 1  15% (due week 2)
_______ Short Comp 2  20% (due week 4)
_______ Long Comp 40% (due week 6)
_______ Reflection 15% (due week 7)
_______ Process work 10%

_______ ProjectTWO 55%

_______ Proposal 10% (due week 8)
_______ Annotated Bibliography 10% (due week 9)
_______ SC 1 25% (due week 11)
_______ LC 45% (due week 14)
_______ Process work 10%

_______ Final Presentation 5%

course objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to

» Determine purpose and audience in your own and others’ writing
SAMPLE SYLLABUS

› Understand how purpose, audience, and context affect writing style, voice, and tone
› Apply appropriate rhetorical strategies for diverse writing situations
› Demonstrate familiarity with and/or compose in different genres
› Demonstrate familiarity with and/or incorporate different media (such as digital presentations, web pages, pod casts, or visual essays)
› Analyze and/or interpret texts and other forms of discourse in multiple genres
› Use logical reasoning
› Summarize, analyze, evaluate, and respond to the ideas of others
› Understand writing as a process that involves invention, drafting, collaboration, and revision
› Identify and incorporate persuasive techniques
› Write informative, analytical, and persuasive essays
› Incorporate the ideas and texts of others
› Use library and non-library research methods
› Evaluate sources
› Use standard grammar
› Follow conventions for word choice, syntax, spelling, and punctuation
› Follow conventions appropriate for the given genre and/or medium, such as style, diction and format
› Use a variety of sentence structures
› Document sources in MLA style

the fine print

attendance.

You are expected to attend class every day and to arrive on-time. UNO's attendance policy is that students are allowed to be excused from a week and a half of class meetings (that is approximately 225 minutes of class time over the course of the semester). Beyond that, your absences are considered unexcused and will result in your final course grade will be penalized. Please note that students who are consistently tardy will be counted absent.

presence of mind.

Not only is attendance required, but so is presence of mind. The body alone cannot learn to write well; for that, presence of mind is required. Be present; be prepared; be nice. (Note: It is not nice to attempt to send or read text or e-mail messages when the instructor's eye is turned).

submission.

All work submitted must be typed and on time. No late work will be accepted without prior permission or valid excuse (like My house burned down or I broke my arm). If, out of the goodness of my heart, I accept work late, it will be docked by one letter grade for every day it is late.

plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a crime committed by desperate writers who should have sought help and advice (and possibly an extension) from their instructors beforehand. Those suspected of this crime will be prosecuted to the fullest extent, which may mean expulsion. The least punishment is a zero on the assignment with no revision option, which will mean that you earn an automatic F in the course.

revision.

Revision is a requisite part of the writing practice, but if you’d like to revise an essay after it has been graded, you may do so if you have completed in good faith all the process work (PW) that preceded it, if you meet with me one-on-one to discuss your plan, and if time allows. In order to be eligible for a new grade, revisions must reflect re-vision--a new seeing--of the topic; they should be whole new essays, re-written from near scratch with only the gold of the draft remaining, not the silt. Essays that have simply been edited for correctness will be lauded, but not graded.
weekONE
Intro to course & projectONE
Brainstorm and discuss the issue, Food
mini-lecture (ML): Reading Like a Writer, or Through the Rhetorical Lens (introduce concepts of ethos, logos, pathos and diction)
Read & Discuss (R&D): Mark Bittman’s TED Talk
available @ http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/mark_bittman_on_what_s_wrong_with_what_we_eat.html
process work (PW): Write about Bittman’s use of argument
R&D: Read and discuss the introduction to Michael Pollan’s In Defense of Food
PW: Write about Pollan’s use of argument or his dictio

weekTWO
SC1 assignment: Respond to Pollan and Bittman by writing a persuasive essay on an issue that they raise. Incorporate Pollan, Bittman, and at least two other sources. 800 word minimum.
ML: Researching, Summarizing, and Integrating Sources (focus: how to search NYTimes.com, NPR, BBC, and TED.com)
PW: drafting SC1
PW: Reviewing & Revising SC1
ML: Good Paragraphs Make Good Reading
PW: Peer editing
SC1 DUE

weekTHREE
R&D: The Meatrix
available @ http://www.themeatrix.com/
SC2 assignment: Write a persuasive essay of at least 800 words. Incorporate at least four sources, one of which must be Pollan, Bittman, or The Meatrix. Ideally, this essay (along with parts of SC1) will be used in your LC.
PW: brainstorming SC2 (and by default, LC)
PW: Researching, Reading, Bookmarking, Summarizing (focus: how to search the library’s databases)
ML: Digging deep, not Wide, or How to Loose the Five-Paragraph Chain
PW: Drafting SC2

weekFOUR
PW: Reviewing & Revising SC2
ML: Hotspots: Title, Intro, Conclusion
SC2 DUE

weekFIVE
LC assignment: Write a persuasive essay of at least 1200 words that incorporates at least five sources that your audience will find credible; at least one of these sources must be one that we’ve read as a class.
ML: On Audience
PW: Brainstorming and Planning your LC, with special consideration for your intended audience
PW: Researching, Reading, Bookmarking, Summarizing
PW: Drafting LC
PW: Reviewing & Revising LC
ML: On Development

weekSIX
PW: Reviewing & Revising LC
ML: On Good Sentences (focus: stylistic devices)
PW: Peer editing LC
LC DUE

weekSEVEN
Reflecting on ProjectONE
Introduce ProjectTWO: You may choose your own topics for projectTWO.
PW: Brainstorming topics for ProjectTWO
PW: Researching, Reading, Bookmarking, Summarizing for projectTWO

weekEIGHT
Proposal assignment: Compose a formal proposal in which you introduce and describe your topic, your purpose, your audience, and your research. You should specifically outline the focus of your SC1 and SC2 and describe how the LC will build on these shorter compositions.
PW: Reviewing & Revising your proposals
Proposals DUE
SAMPLE SYLLABUS

week NINE
PW: Researching, Reading, Bookmarking, Summarizing for projectTWO
ML: What is an Annotated Bibliography
PW: Drafting your Annotated Bibliographies
PW: Reviewing & Revising your Annotated Bibliographies
Annotated Bibliographies DUE

week TEN
ML: Digging Deep, Not Wide
PW: Drafting SC1
PW: Reviewing & Revising your SC1
PW: Peer editing SC1
SC1 DUE

week ELEVEN
PW: Reflecting on projectTWO: Where You’re Going, Where You’ve Been
PW: Planning and drafting SC2
PW: Reviewing & Revising your SC2

week TWELVE
ML: On editing issues
PW: Peer editing SC2
SC DUE

week THIRTEEN
PW: Reflecting on projectTWO: Where You’re Going, Where You’ve Been
PW: Planning and drafting the LC
ML: Using Headings and other formatting in your LC
PW: Reviewing, Reflecting, Revising the LC
PW: Meeting with me to discuss your LC

week FOURTEEN
PW: Reviewing, Reflecting, Revising the LC
PW: Peer editing LC
LC DUE

week FIFTEEN
PW: Reflecting on your projectTWO and your writing experience this semester
PW: Preparing your presentation

Finals’ Week:
Project Portfolio DUE
Presentation