

WRIT1002 Academic Writing -- Semester 2 2009

Instructions for Online Participation

Length: 1,500 words (comprising of three 500-word posts)

Weight: 30% of the final mark (10% per assessable post)

Due dates: 5pm Friday in Weeks 4, 6 & 8 (the usual late penalties apply for posts received after these deadlines)

Preamble

The best way to become a better writer is to write and engage in an active exchange of ideas. With just one live lecture and an hour of face-to-face tutorial time a week, the discussion board extends the learning environment outside of the formal classroom and provides a student forum that is accessible 24 hours a day. It is a place to pose questions and offer answers about issues raised in lectures and tutorials. The discussion board provides a testing ground to put forward and defend a point of view. Subjecting ideas to peer review is recognised as a valuable learning opportunity for both academic staff and students in all disciplines.

Assessment requirements

The posts should take the form of a response to an issue or question raised in the live lecture. Thus, students will be rewarded for thoughtful posts that demonstrate that they have been attentive during the lecture and have read (or watched) the associated texts. Sometimes lecturers will pose a specific discussion question (or questions) but students should also feel free to generate their own questions and respond to other students' ideas and opinions.

Assessable posts are due by 5pm Friday on:

- 21 August (in response to a question or issue raised in weeks 1-4);
- 4 September (in response to a question or issue raised in weeks 5-6);
- 18 September (in response to a question or issue raised in weeks 7-8).

Remember that this is a compulsory component of the course and standard late penalties apply for late posts. There is some flexibility about word length and how to put together assessable posts but this should be negotiated with tutors. Students may post as many unassessed posts as they wish but should place the posts that are assessable in the areas marked 'assessable posts'. Students should provide a word count at the end of each assessable post.

At least one of the assessable posts should take the form of a response to another student's post (a type of peer review). Ideally, this should take the form of a refutation (rebuttal). This will help students to identify logical fallacies (flaws in other people's arguments) and to engage in lively but respectful academic debate. The ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in other people's arguments and to engage in active debate is a very important part of academic writing. Model posts from previous students are available on the WebCT site. Additionally, the chapter from Graff & Birkenstein's *They Say, I Say* provides some very useful templates for rebutting others' ideas and it is available in your Course Reader and on e-reserve.

Additional information

Students will not be penalised if there is some kind of enrolment or technical problem that prevents them from posting in the first week or two of semester however students who do not take part in the discussion forum will fail this unit of study. Be mindful that the WebCT software allows tutors to monitor exactly how long students spend on the site, what they look at, and download.

Students will be penalised for posting racist, sexist or threatening messages.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to the online environment.

Sydney eLearning 2009

Lunchtime session handout

Dr Rebacca Johnke, Peer assessment

WRIT1002: Grading rubric for online discussion participation

This grading rubric indicates broadly the qualitative judgments implied by the various grades which may be awarded. A more precise evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of online posts will be provided in markers' comments.

75% + Distinction and High Distinction range

The writing is characterized by creativity, clarity, and independent insight. A High Distinction is distinguished from a Distinction by the work's demonstration of awareness of subtleties, nuances, qualifications and a possible other case.

Work may be deemed exemplary for any of the following reasons:

- Contributes well-written commentaries about the lectures and assigned readings and is able to make connections with academic writing practices in the disciplines;
- Shows respect for other students' arguments and opinions but is able to engage with and refute their arguments in a scholarly manner;
- Demonstrates careful thought about the rhetorical, critical, historical and/or theoretical context of the texts or issues;
- Provides evidence of wide-ranging reading;
- Makes connections between the rhetorical context of writing practices in and outside of the academy;
- Properly cites sources of information and ideas;
- Regularly asks and answers questions and participates in online discussions above and beyond the required contributions;
- Responds to requests for assistance from other students;
- Meets but does not exceed word limits;
- Meets deadlines.

65-74% Credit range

Work may be deemed above average for any of the following reasons:

- Contributes well-written commentaries about the lectures and assigned readings;
- Shows respect for other students' arguments and opinions and attempts to engage with and refute their arguments in a scholarly manner;
- The work shows some understanding of relevant rhetorical, critical and theoretical considerations and of the conceptual issues raised by a unit of study;
- Is clearly and effectively written;
- Properly cites sources of information and ideas;
- Occasionally asks and answers questions and participates in online discussions above and beyond the required contributions;
- Sometimes responds to requests for assistance from other students;
- Understands the difference between an academic discussion board and other forms of electronic communication;
- Meets but does not exceed word limits;

- Meets deadlines.

A Low Credit is distinguished from a High Pass by the extent of independent discussion of focal texts or issues, the clarity of the writing and the extent to which it attempts a more general critical and/or theoretical argument.

50-64% Pass range

Work may be deemed satisfactory for any of the following reasons:

- Contributes posts about the lectures and assigned readings;
- Attempts to make connections between course material and academic writing in disciplines;
- Evidence of some engagement with other students' posts;
- Evidence of attempt to rebut other students' arguments;
- May tend towards generality in answering a question;
- May present simplistic comment or unsubstantiated assertions;
- Is adequately expressed though there may be some weaknesses in this area;
- Ability to judge the difference between an academic discussion board and other forms of electronic communication;
- May contain some referencing errors;
- Generally meets but does not exceed word limits;
- Generally meets deadlines.

0-49% Fail

Work may fail for any of the following reasons:

- Does not contribute regularly and substantively to the discussion board;
- No evidence of having attended the lectures or of having read the prescribed material closely;
- Inability to make connections between course material and academic writing in disciplines;
- Inability to judge the difference between an academic discussion board and other forms of electronic communication;
- Insufficient engagement with other students' posts;
- Inability to rebut other students' arguments;
- Inappropriate (rude, aggressive, racist or sexist) or obscure expression;
- Academic dishonesty;
- Does not meet word limits;
- Late posts without approved extension;
- Failure to follow instructions.

Sources: Adapted from the Department of English's 'Guide to the interpretation of grades' and Sharon Kleinman's grading rubric on page 14 of her article 'Strategies for encouraging active learning, interaction, and academic integrity in online courses.' *Communication Teacher* 19.1 (2005): 13-18.