

DePaul University | School of Continuing and Professional Studies
| Undergraduate Program

CCH 142

MECHANICS OF GOOD WRITING (SEMINAR)

WINTER, 2021

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION



Name: Kamilah Cummings

Office Location: Remote (Email, Phone, Zoom/Skype, Chat)

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: kcummi12@depaul.edu

Course Dates: February 8, 2021 – March 21, 2021

Course Location and Delivery Format: Online; D2L

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing Toolkit courses introduce, deepen, and provide practical engagement with specific topics in writing and rhetoric. These online courses allow students to engage with their peers and instructors through asynchronous and synchronous elements.

In *Writing Toolkit: Mechanics of Good Writing* students will learn how to improve the style, clarity, and correctness of their writing. The course will help students expand their knowledge and build confidence in their control of writing mechanics including, rules of grammar, sentence structure, word choice, parts of speech, and punctuation. Students will learn how to fix the most common mistakes that writers make. They will also learn when, why, and how to break the rules. Through weekly readings, discussions, and short, focused work using a current writing assignment of their own, students will identify and address areas for improvement in their writing.

(2 credit hours)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of grammar and mechanics to good writing
- Understand basic rules of writing mechanics for sentence construction, punctuation, and word usage
- Analyze your own writing to recognize errors and identify areas for improvement in mechanics and style
- Demonstrate the ability to self-revise your writing to improve grammar, mechanics, and style
- Analyze the writing of others to identify examples of “good” writing
- Identify and employ a variety of tools to improve writing mechanics and style
- Determine when to break rules of mechanics and explain your stylistic choices

FX: Identifies individual areas for improvement in writing mechanics in a writing project related to the student’s focus area and employs a variety of strategies to address them to improve overall clarity, style, and presentation of ideas.

H3X: Identifies individual areas for improvement in writing mechanics and employs a variety of strategies to address them for ongoing improvement of writing clarity, style, and presentation of ideas.

LEARNING STRATEGIES & RESOURCES

In this course, the following teaching and learning techniques are used: D2L discussion boards, critical reading, online exercise resources, learning from others through peer work, reflective learning, and writing. Students should expect to complete weekly writing assignments in this course. Reading, writing, and engaging in weekly discussions are critical to learning and successfully demonstrating the course learning outcomes, so please plan time for all three.

Textbook

None Required

Recommended Textbook:

Although no textbook is required, I highly recommend obtaining a copy of *A Writer’s Reference* by Hacker and Sommers. It contains detailed sections dedicated to each area of grammar that we explore in this course.

Required Reading:

Required course readings will be available in D2L.

LEARNING DELIVERABLES (GRADED EVIDENCE OF LEARNING)

- 1) Weekly Revising & Reflection Assignments (4)
- 2) Self-Assessment Quiz
- 3) Grammar, Mechanics, Style, & You, Too Quiz
- 4) Discussion Boards (5)

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Weekly Revising & Reflection Assignments (4)	60% (15% each)
Self-Assessment Quiz	5%
Grammar, Mechanics, Style, & You, Too Quiz	5%
Discussion Boards (5)	30%
Total	100%

GRADING SCALE AND CRITERIA

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	

Grades lower than C- are not passing.

See additional information pertaining to the grade designations, for [graduate grades](#) and for [undergraduate grades](#).

This course is as much about the journey as the destination. Therefore, your work will be assessed more on your ability to complete the writing task as assigned and to reflect on your writing experience than on the content itself, though as part of confronting writer's block, your assignments should meet expectations for a college-level first draft. This means that though your submissions are not expected to resemble polished final revisions, they should be complete drafts that respond effectively to the assignment instructions.

PASS/FAIL GRADE POLICY

DePaul Temporary Pass/D/F policy

The university has adopted a special temporary P/D/F grading policy for both graduate and undergraduate programs until further notice. Details of the P/D/F policy can be found on the university [COVID 19 Update](#) website.

Highlights:

- Students can choose or remove the P/D/F option until 3 days after the grade deadline.
- Go to Campus Connect, Academic Records, to select or remove this option.
- See the COVID 19 update website for exact dates and deadlines.
- Faculty will submit a letter grade in all cases.
- If the grade is a C- or better, with the P/D/F option, it will automatically change to Pass.
- All other grades will remain including D, F, IN, M, W.
- Students can choose this option for any or all of their program requirements.
- Contact your advisor for more information.

This policy is temporarily overridden by the Covid 19 P/D/F policy and will resume when the temporary policy has ended.

Students interested in taking a course on a Pass/Fail grade basis need to contact their academic advisor to request the option by the end of the second week of the course. SCPS students can email their requests to their advisors and include the course number, quarter, and student ID number. Non-SCPS students need to contact their home college for instructions on submitting these requests. Please review the P/F guidelines, course restrictions and GPA implications in the [University catalog](#) before making your request. A grade of Pass represents a D or better standard and therefore will not meet requirements that have a minimum standard of C- or better. For further clarification of the P/F option for SCPS students beyond the university guidelines, please refer to the [SCPS catalog](#).

MINIMUM SCPS GRADE POLICY

SCPS degree programs with majors (BAPSBA, BAPSC, BAHA, BADA, BANM, and BALS) require a grade of C- or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to course requirements in the Major and in the LL 261: Essay Writing course in the College Core. All other course requirements in these programs can be completed with a grade of D or better. SCPS degree completion major programs (BAABS and BALS) require a C- or better in all courses taken at DePaul applied to those programs. SCPS competence-based programs (BAIFA, BAC, BAGB and BAECE) require a D or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to competence requirements.

INCOMPLETE (IN) GRADE

This process follows university [policy](#).

A student who encounters an unusual or unforeseeable circumstance that prevents her/him from completing the course requirements by the end of the term may request a time extension to complete the work.

- The student must formally initiate the request by submitting the [Contract for Issuance of Incomplete Grade form](#) (via email, word doc), no later than week 10 (or prior to the final week of a shorter-term course).
- The instructor has discretion to approve or not approve the student's request for an IN grade.
- The instructor has discretion to set the deadline for completion of the work, which may be earlier but no later than two quarters (not counting Summer term).
- The instructor may not enter an IN grade on behalf of a student without a completed and agreed upon contract.
- The student is alerted that IN grades are not considered by Financial Aid as evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Any changes to the course schedule will be communicated in advance via D2L. In the event of a major change, students will be emailed notification as well.

Week 1 - ONLINE MODULE 1: Course Introduction + The Importance of Mechanics
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- Developmental Reading: “The Wrong Way to Teach Grammar” by Michelle Navarre Cleary
- Supplemental Reading: “The All-Important Relationship Between Grammar and Writing” by Melissa Donovan
- 1.1 Self-Assessment Quiz: Grammar, Mechanics, Style, & You
- 1.2 Discussion Board: Introduction + Grammar, Mechanics, and You
- 1.3 Weekly Revision & Reflection Assignment 1: Basic Grammar

**All Module 1 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, February 14. ❤️

Week 2 - ONLINE MODULE 2: Sentences

- Developmental Reading: “How to write the perfect sentence” by Joe Moran
- Supplemental Reading: “What You Read Matters More Than You Might Think: Why deep reading makes you a better writer” by Susan Reynolds
- 2.1 Discussion Board: It’s All about the Sentences
- 2.2 Weekly Revision & Reflection Assignment 2: Sentences

**All Module 2 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, February 21.

Week 3 - ONLINE MODULE 3: Words

- Developmental Reading: “How to Transform Words Into Writing Inspiration” by Melissa Donovan
- Supplemental Reading: “Why Inclusive Language Is So Important” by Laura Mondragón
- 3.1 Discussion Board: Word Power
- 3.2 Weekly Revision & Reflection Assignment 3: Words

**All Module 3 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, February 28.

Week 4 - ONLINE MODULE 4: Punctuation

- Developmental Reading: “Why We Should Learn to Love the Full Stop” by Joe Moran
- Supplemental Reading: “How to Misuse Punctuation Marks” by Melissa Donovan
- 4.1 Discussion Board: Punctuate this.!?
- 4.2 Weekly Revision & Reflection Assignment 4: Punctuation

**All Module 4 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 7.

Week 5 - ONLINE MODULE 5: Style & Moving Forward

- Developmental Reading: “Eight Characteristics of Good Writing” by Melissa Donovan
- Supplemental Reading: “Bilingual authors are challenging the practice of italicizing non-English words” by Thu-Huong Ha
- 5.1 Quiz: Grammar, Mechanics, Style & You, Too
- 5.2 Discussion Board: Grammar, Mechanics, Style & You Revisited
- 5.3 Weekly Revision & Final Reflection Assignment 5: Style

**All Module 5 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 14.

ZOOM MEETING SCHEDULE:

The schedule for the optional Zoom virtual class meeting dates for this course is below. A Zoom invitation link will be posted in D2L. Students will be notified in advance of any changes.

Week /Date	Day	Time
1 / February 9	Tuesday	6 p.m. – 7 p.m. (CT)
3 / February 23	Tuesday	6 p.m. – 7 p.m. (CT)
5 / March 9	Tuesday	6 p.m. – 7 p.m. (CT)

COURSE POLICIES**Assignment Submission Policy**

All assignments should be submitted to the respective submission folder in D2L by 11:59 p.m. (CST) on the posted due date unless otherwise noted. Emailed assignments are not accepted.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are accepted **up to seven (7) days after the original due date**. The submission folder for each assignment **will permanently close at 11:59 p.m. seven (7) days from the assignment’s original due date**.

There is a **10 percent penalty deducted from all late submissions**. Due to the University’s end-of-term final grade submission requirements, **final assignments must be submitted on time. Late submissions during finals week are not accepted**

Late discussion posts are not accepted.

Discussion Policy

All required Discussion posts should be posted to the respective discussion thread by 11:59 p.m. CST on the due date unless otherwise noted. To facilitate lively discussion, initial discussion responses should be posted by midweek (Wednesday) to allow opportunities for peer responses. **Discussion threads will lock weekly at 11:59 p.m. CST on Sunday night.** Because of the importance of active participation, **late discussion posts are not accepted.** Discussion posts should respond thoughtfully and substantively to the discussion prompts, be focused on the course content, and be respectful of others.

To earn full credit for discussion posts, you must completely and substantively respond to the initial discussion prompt and your peers as required. Substantive posts expand and further the discussion by referencing course materials, connecting to relevant life experiences, and/or asking questions.

Feedback + Grades

I will typically post feedback and grades for written assignments seven (7) days from the original due date. Feedback time on late submissions varies, as I typically complete feedback in cycles. I will usually post Discussion (DQ) grades seven (7) days from the date the thread locks.

Lifeline + Free-Pass Policy

To state the obvious: Life is unpredictable. I understand that even the best laid plans might be interrupted by the arrival of things unexpected (or maybe even expected). In these instances, if you know that you will not be able to submit an assignment on time, please contact me **before the due date** to avoid the late penalty. We can then agree upon a new due date for your assignment. I extend this courtesy **once per student per quarter** barring extenuating circumstances. Use it wisely. 😊

Lastly, though this is an online course, you are not on your own. I am available to meet with you. Therefore, if at any point you have questions, fall behind, become overwhelmed, experience difficulty, or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me sooner than later. Don't sink when I am here to help you swim.

THIS COURSE INCLUDES AND ADHERES TO THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES DESCRIBED IN THE LINKS BELOW:

[APA citation format](#)

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Incomplete \(IN\) and Research \(R\) Grades Expiration Policy](#)

[Withdrawal/Drop Policy](#) and [Withdrawal Tuition](#)

[Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability](#)

Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use during this course. This is best done early in the term. Our conversation will remain confidential.

[Protection of Human Research Participants](#)

OTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

[University Center for Writing-based Learning](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

INSTRUCTOR BIO

I think the knowledge one gains from a quality education is invaluable. I have a passion for writing, and its multitude of uses. Additionally, I love helping people transform their thoughts into written words. I hold a master's degree in journalism from Roosevelt University, and I have more than 20 years of professional experience as a writer and editor. I have taught university writing, research, argumentation, communication, and critical thinking courses both face-to-face and online for the last 15 years.

My writing research interests focus on writing as an inclusive medium for communication, learning, documenting, healing, transforming and empowering. Additionally, my research interests include media, culture, and identity studies as well as Prince studies. I have presented and published domestically and internationally in my areas of research.

Lastly, despite all my attempts to avoid and correct them, I, too, make grammatical and mechanical errors. 😊 So, don't beat yourself up; this course is about minimizing errors and improving grammar and mechanics – not perfection. Even masters make mistakes.

Fun facts: I love Prince, animals, music, travel, film/documentaries, tennis, health & wellness, the Netflix series *Peaky Blinders* and *Ozark*, the original *Law & Order*, and just about anything from the 1970s.

I look forward to “meeting” you in our online classroom and working with you on your journey to master the mechanics of good writing.

KC

CREDITS: This course was designed and produced by Kamilah Cummings. 2020.