

ENGL 2152: Argument & Exposition

Section 9, with Brian Donovan, Spring 2019

MnSCU Course ID # 195536

Schedule & Contact Information

Class meets 11:00 A.M. to 12:15 P.M. Tuesdays and Thursdays in Hagg-Sauer Hall room 105.

Final Meeting (not an exam): Friday 3 May 3:30–5:30 P.M., same room.

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Office: Hagg-Sauer 374

Office Hours:

- Mondays 9:00–9:50, 10:00–10:50, & 11:00–11:50 A.M.; & 3:00–3:50 P.M.
- Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30–10:45 & 3:30–4:45 P.M.

About the Course

Official Catalog Description:

2152 ARGUMENT AND EXPOSITION (3 credits) Instruction and practice in writing for various academic and similar contexts, with particular focus on formal and informal argument for specific rather than general audiences. Includes seeking out, selecting, using, and documenting written sources, and a component on oral presentation. Prerequisite: ENGL 1151 Composition. Liberal Education Goal Area 1.

Official Course Assessment Areas:

Work will be assessed to ascertain whether students have—

- articulated their arguments, oral and written, in adequately formal and correct English style;
- appropriately documented all quoted material, such factual claims as are not common knowledge, and other points for which they are indebted to specific sources;
- reasoned their own and their audience's way from facts to thesis, or thesis to facts, clearly and validly;
- anticipated and responded to counter-arguments likely to arise in the minds of an intelligent skeptical audience;
- organized overall coherence in a written discourse of substantial length, i.e. in the thousands of words.

This is primarily a writing course, though with an oral-presentation component as well. It is designed to advance your abilities in the sorts of writing and speaking that are most commonly required of students at the undergraduate level, notably including argument (which will be the primary emphasis in this section, exposition being treated as a means to the persuasive end of argument), and the use and formal documentation of good sources. These abilities will also serve you in good stead after graduation, whether you employ them in graduate study, professional employment, or general citizenship.

Textbooks

The main textbook for this course is one I have written myself and had printed and bound at BSU Printing Services. Its title is *Rhetoric to Larissa*. It is available at the on-campus bookstore only, for \$11 new (none of which comes to my own pocket). You will also need the following handbook:

Glenn, Cheryl, and Loretta Gray. *Harbrace Essentials*. 3rd ed., Cengage, 2018. ISBN 9781337556880.

I do not recommend renting this handbook, which is all the campus bookstore seems to be offering; this is a book to hang onto for reference throughout college and beyond. You have time to order this from an on-line supplier before you will really need it, but do obtain it: my responses to your papers will routinely reference this specifically.

Papers

“If you would be a writer, write” (Epictetus). Since practice is the royal road to excellence in writing, your writing of papers will be the heart of the course and the primary basis for your course grade. There will be four papers, including a brief in-class paper (#1) done at the first meeting, with your choice among several prompts. The other three will all be argument papers assigned as homework, on topics to be negotiated individually with me. All four papers should be rational arguments, each supporting an actually or potentially controversial thesis—a thesis that an intelligent reader can readily identify even if it is not expressed in a single thesis sentence.

The process will begin with your submitting three topic ideas, each in question form; I will review these and advise you on which are or could be made suitable. After this topic-setting phase, you will prepare a draft version of each paper for workshopping in small groups during class; plan to bring four copies for these workshop sessions, along with some questions to ask classmates about your draft, so as to probe how the writing in progress so far comes across to people other than yourself, the writer. (You may know what you intend to say, but do your words and sentences actually say that, to persons who lack such advance knowledge, and who also lack your unique experiences, including the experience of repeatedly rereading your own sentences as you worked?) This workshopped version will be designated the “x” version of your paper. You will revise the paper between the group workshop session and the time you hand in to me a more advanced draft, called the “y” version. I shall return the “y” version with comments and suggestions of my own. The final or “z” version that you next prepare will alone be graded, as well as receiving further comment from me.

Papers #3 and #4 will involve library research and the formal documentation of sources according to the MLA and APA documentation styles: Paper #3 in MLA, Paper #4 in APA.

In the following table of papers, lengths are ballpark expectations. Figures for number of pages assume 360 words per page, which is typical for 12-point Times Roman, double-spaced, single-sided, with one-inch margins all round on standard 8½"×11" white paper—the standard format for college-level homework writing assignments. A heading on the first page only should include your name, the *actual* date of submission, the course (ENGL 2152 §9), my name (so that if the paper goes astray on campus it can perhaps find its way to me), and a brief notation indicating paper number and version letter (e.g., “Paper #2y” for the one due 1/29). This last is the more important because we shall often have more than one of these papers in the works at one time, at different stages of the overall process; if your paper is behind or off schedule in any way it is especially vital.

This first-page heading may be single-spaced; every other part of each typed paper should be double-spaced, including block quotations and bibliography, with no extra space between paragraphs (or between bibliography entries). Pages after that first should be numbered at the right side of the top margin: use your word-processing software to take care of this automatically, via “header” commands and menus. I welcome submission of materials due to me by e-mail, but that should be in addition to and not in lieu of hard-copy submission (since e-mail is not so reliable as it used to be), and it is not required. Acceptable file formats for e-mail submission include .doc, .docx, .pdf, and .rtf. Google Docs links are not reliable for submitting written work.

#	Length		3 Topic Questions		“x” Version	“y” Version		“z” Version	
	Wds.	Pp.	Due in (to Brian)	Returned with comment	Four copies for workshop	Due in (to Brian)	Returned with comment	Due in (to Brian)	Returned with grade & comment
1	200	~1*						Tu 1/15	Tu 1/22
2	1200	3½	In class Th 1/17		Tu 1/22	Tu 1/29	Tu 2/5	Tu 2/12	Tu 2/19
3	2100	5½	Tu 2/5	Tu 2/12	Tu 2/19	Tu 2/26	Tu 3/5	Tu 3/19	Tu 3/26
4	3000	8½	Conferences: Tu & Th 3/5–7		Tu 3/26	Tu 4/2	Tu 4/9	Tu 4/23	Tu 4/30

*Handwritten in class and so not to the same scale as the others.

Oral Components

One live debate will be held, or more depending on enrollment. You will also give an oral presentation towards the end of the semester. The oral component of the course comprises these and participation in group work and whole-class discussions. The formal oral presentation will be based on one of Papers #2 – #4—not talking *about* the paper, nor yet reading all or parts of it aloud, but rather an extemporaneous oral version of the argument, roughly ten minutes long with five for Q&A.

Grading

Grades on the final (“z”) versions of your papers (65%), and on the oral components (20% total), will be the main basis for your course grade, and they will be my own assessment of their overall quality—the quality of the observation, research, and reasoning that went into them, their organization and expression, and the consideration given to how actual and intelligent readers or hearers are likely to respond—regardless of whether I personally agree or disagree with what you are arguing. Your course grade will be primarily based on these grades, averaged together using the standard registrar’s system of numeric equivalents: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0. Work not done or submitted at all will be given a kind of super-F, with the numerical value of –2. Pluses and minuses respectively add and subtract one-third of a point, so B+ = 3½ and B– = 2⅔. Paper grades will be weighted in proportion to the assigned ballpark word counts listed in the table: each 100 words there translates to 1% of the course grade, so for instance your grade on paper #3z will account for 21% of your course grade. To a lesser extent, your course grade will also reflect the timeliness of your homework, and your presence for and participation in class discussions, small-group discussions of one another’s paper ideas and “x” drafts, and others’ oral presentations (15%). Your course grade may also be raised a bit if I see consistent improvement over the semester—but do not think you can profit by deliberately bombing early assignments.

Accessibility Notice

All persons coming and behaving as students are welcome in this class. Accessibility Services will work with me to honor the purposes and guarantees of 42 U.S. Code Chapter 126, by arranging reasonable and necessary accommodations. If you require such, start with Accessibility Services (Decker 202, Box 43, 755-3883, [accessibilityservices\[at-sign\]bemidjistate.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices[at-sign]bemidjistate.edu)). Relevant disclosures direct to me are at your discretion, will be kept confidential, and may help further. Upon request we can make this syllabus itself, and other course materials, available in alternate formats.

A Note on Academic Integrity

Within the culture of American Academe today, when you submit intellectual work product (such as papers) for academic credit, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own new and original stuff, the result of your own individual thinking. Your thinking will be much enriched by others' input, we all hope; but you are expected to digest this input thoroughly and assimilate it into your own thinking, much as your body might digest the tissue of a plant or animal that you ingest as food, and convert it into your own body tissue. Facts and ideas (as well as actual wording) for which you are indebted to others must be precisely noted and carefully acknowledged, even what you have more or less thoroughly digested and assimilated—except for common knowledge, and other stuff you have been carrying around in your head so long you cannot remember where you picked it up. Papers must also be newly produced within the space of the semester, and exclusively for this course. Demonstrable violation of these expectations, with apparent intent to deceive or defraud, will result in a failing grade for the course, and will also be reported to the appropriate university officials, which may result in yet more severe sanctions if this should thereby prove not to have been a first offense.