

# Writing course for advanced english learners



## 1. General Introduction

This course is designed as an advanced writing course for advanced English learners. As is suggested by the title, the course will focus on one mode of English writing: exposition. We will first discuss briefly some essential issues about writing and the relationship between reading and writing as an introduction, laying special emphasis on the importance of mutual enhancement of critical reading and effective writing.

The Expository Mode is discussed briefly in comparison with other modes of writing to strengthen the learners' awareness of writing modes for effective writing and then the Three-Part Essay Format is introduced in detail as a universal essay organization in the hope that learners keep in mind the basic structure of English essays when they write in English. For the core contents we will move on to different specific Expository Modes, such as Exemplification/Illustration, Classification/Division, Comparison/Contrast, and Process Analysis, Cause / Effect, Definition and so on.

Throughout the course, we will examine some expository essays written for both a general and academic audience. We will pay particular attention to critical analysis of quite a few essays (or "articles") that are widely regarded as writing models by both professional and amateur writers. Reading is assumed to be vital to effective writing — to provide effective models, help generate ideas for meaningful essays and develop and reinforce critical thinking skills. Therefore, critical reading will take precedence throughout this writing course. Of course, the focus of the course will be on what you can write with what you may learn from your readings — that is, on the

essays you write yourselves as English learners and non-professional writers. For writing practice, you are supposed to keep a Reading Journal and write altogether four formal essays — one Classification / Division (Assignment 1), one Comparison / Contrast (Assignment 2), one Cause / Effect (Assignment 3) and one Definition (Assignment 4). You will learn to organize and develop your ideas in a coherent and unified way, to revise, edit and proofread your own work and the work of others.

The course is hopefully intended to help you break out of a conventional way of approaching the world, through practicing the art of written exposition, with the purpose of becoming well-versed in the different uses of rhetoric and the aims of various types of exposition. You will further practice actively critical thinking in order to be able to intelligently question and analyze multiple topics — while in each case keeping your particular audiences in mind — and to become comfortable writing rhetorical critiques, examining contemporary controversial subjects, evaluating forms of socio-cultural terminology/articulation/visual expression, and constructing rebuttals. Topics will be discussed relating to arts, social issues, politics, business, and other areas of your interest, all of which are important to the development of an educated mind. Class discussions will usually begin with students' presentation of the reading materials concerned.

The presenter might relate the material to the themes of the course, compare it to previous readings, and/or ask questions of the readings for the class to consider. Audio-visual aids or other relevant media are preferable in students' presentation. Many class periods or partial class periods will be spent on peer, group and class discussions of the structural, stylistic and

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thematic features of the assigned readings, and of course, more discussions will be about your own writing.

## 2. Students' Class Presentation of the Assigned Readings

Length: 10 ~ 15 minutes (not to exceed 20 minutes). Allow several minutes at the end to invite and address questions from your audience. Format:

Reading, lecture, discussion, or some comfortable combination of the three.

Handouts /audio and visual aids /blackboard writing where appropriate are greatly encouraged. Contents: Begin by telling your audience why you think your presentation is relevant to your classmates' interests. Provide the broader context or background in which your presentation is situated.

Provide enough information about the content of your presentation materials so that your listeners can follow the conclusions, assertions, implications, or questions for further study that you raise in your presentation.

## 3. Reading Journal

Throughout this course you should keep a Reading Journal. After you read each selection assigned for this course, I'd like you to sit down and spend at least half an hour talking to me — on paper — about what you've just read. Don't feel you have to come to any hard and fast conclusions; instead think of this as exploratory writing, a chance to record your initial reactions. This should, however, be connected prose. I believe you'll find that the very act of putting your ideas into full sentences will make you see more connections and possibilities in the text you've just read than merely jotting down scattered notes does. If the reading is very complicated, you may want to begin by summarizing it in order to sort out the information covered.

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But you should not stop there. Go on to tell me what you think of what you've read. Try to make sense of it in light of what you've previously known about the subject and what you know about the text in general. Some specific questions you might answer are as follows:

- What did you not understand? Were there any unfamiliar words or references?

What things do you hope will be explained further as you read more or hear more in class? Are you wondering what reactions your classmates have to anything in the reading?

- What connections with previous reading or information do you see in this material? Does it alter earlier opinions you may have formed? Does it deepen your understanding of the subject?
- Would you argue with the author on any point? Can you imagine others who would? Do you think the author is ignoring anything vital or misrepresenting reality in any way? Does this seem to be a conscious or unconscious choice?
- Have you had any personal experience with the subject that makes you see it in a different light? Have you talked with anyone else who has?
- What seem to be the major concepts or key terms in this piece of reading? How important are they likely to be in the long run? How important are they likely to be to people outside of this course or this discipline?
- What is the overall structure of this piece of reading? How are the details organized?

What is the controlling idea? Where is the thesis stated?

- What are the main stylistic features in this piece of reading? Which word/s or phrase/s do you appreciate? Which sentence/s or paragraph/s do you like? Why?
- What are the things you may learn from your reading as an English writing learner? In whatever way do you think this piece of reading may be improved?

These are just a few of the hundreds of questions you can ask of your reading. The main point of writing a reading journal is to use it to examine reading in a more thorough way. And at the same time this should be freer, more creative than the focused, structured essays teachers usually ask you to write. In this writing it may help sometimes to think of yourself as talking back to the author you've just read. What is more, keeping a reading journal helps to form a habit of critical reading, thinking and writing.

#### 4. Essay Format:

The following is the essay format you must use for all your assignments: > All drafts must be double-spaced (every other line if handwritten), on one side of the paper with 2.5 cm margins on four sides, left and right, up and down. > Pages must be numbered.

> All essays must have titles. > Title pages are not necessary, but you must put your name, assignment number, and due date in the upper left corner of the first page. > If you have access to a computer, use it, by all means.

#### 5. Attendance:

Our time in class will be valuable to you for many reasons. You will have opportunities to give class presentations of your own reading and writing. You will be involved in discussions of the reading assignments, thereby enhancing your understanding of these readings. You will have chances to work on your own drafts, getting immediate feedback from your peers and the instructor. And you will be introduced to a variety of writing techniques. You will be opposed to some audio/video teaching programs.

Ultimately, regular practice in class with your reading and writing skills is the most important way you may improve them; therefore, attendance in class is mandatory. If you have to be absent, let me know before you miss the class. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for all the materials covered and you must hand in any work you missed. Remember attendance will make up 10% of your final score. Believe it or not, we will have fun in class once in a while.

#### 6. Revision Policy:

Before you turn in the first two assignments to me for evaluation, you are required to revise them referring to your peer reviewer's comments and suggestions. I will collect and read the rough drafts of Assignments 3 & 4, comment on them, give you revision suggestions, but will not evaluate them. After you receive your rough drafts with my feedback, you are required to revise them at least once. Your revised drafts will be graded. While revision for the first two essays is not mandatory, I encourage you to revise them because revising is the best way to improve your writing skills. I would be very happy to read them and talk about them with you.

#### 7. Grading Policy:

Assignments 1 and 2 account for 20% of your final score: 10% for each.

Assignments 3 and 4 account for 40% of your final score: 20% for each.

Reading journal accounts for 10% of your final score.

Class presentation and performance account for 20% of your final score.

Attendance, let me mention it again, accounts for 10% of your final score.