TESL-096.002: The Culture of US Higher Education for Graduate Students

Fall 2012
Class Meetings:
Tuesday, 2:30-5:00 p.m.
8/27-12/17
Letts Hall Lower Level Conference Room

Instructor: Kelly Wiechart
Contact Information:
Letts Hall Lower Level Suite 5
Wiechart@american.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:15 and by appointment

Course Description:
This course is designed to help international graduate students adapt to the academic and cultural expectations during their course of study at American University. Therefore, a large portion of the course will focus on the individual needs of each student and draw upon the challenges that students face in their classes and on campus. This course will support students’ transition to a new country, academic culture, and style of writing.

Course Goals:
As a result of this course, students will:
• Develop awareness of US academic cultural norms and strategies to apply this awareness in graduate writing, research, and classroom practices
• Develop awareness of the role that U.S. culture plays more generally in your ability to adapt and communicate successfully.
• Use a variety of resources including faculty, classmates, reference librarians, and other campus support services to successfully work within the AU academic community
• Gain the understanding of the role of research practices in your academic careers
• Demonstrate successful graduate level writing and research skills
• Understand and apply the concept of knowledge ownership as it relates to academic integrity
Course Texts:

Required:

Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab)

Other materials will be accessed via the Internet or made available on Blackboard as needed.

Assignment Descriptions and Due Dates

You are required to complete all assigned readings and tasks before class. All work must be handed in by the due dates established; late work will be penalized. Assignments have varying due dates as described below. A detailed class schedule, available on Blackboard, contains information about readings and weekly activities; additional information will be provided for each assignment.

Action plan for achieving all Fall semester coursework Due Sept. 4, 2012
Students will design a detailed action plan describing when they will begin assignments for each course, self-imposed draft deadlines, assignment due dates, challenges involved in certain assignments, and means to address these challenges (~2 bulleted pages).

Academic support system essay Due Sept. 18, 2012
Success in academia requires students to be strategic and proactive. These qualities are especially important for international students who compete with domestic students while working in second language and a foreign academic culture. Experiential research is recommended: use interviews with campus contacts, advice from peers, or personal experience to draft a descriptive essay that details your academic support system (2-3 pages).
Goal: To interact with faculty, students, and campus organizations to define a support system that will be broad enough to help students address all of their academic needs and deep enough to lead them to success.

Analytic Essay Due Oct. 16, 2012
Students will compose a short academic essay integrating Problem-Solution Essay techniques.

Goal: To demonstrate that students can integrate sources, read and understand short academic articles, and use an evolving thesis.

Literature Review Due Nov. 13, 2012
In this assignment, students will write a short literature review. You may choose your own topic, but keep in mind that this assignment will be more useful to you if your topic relates to something you are studying in another course (4-6 pages).
Goal: To prepare students to write literature reviews in their current courses and for future academic research.
**Major Paper from a Content Course  Due Nov. 27, 2012**

In this assignment, students will use a major paper from the content course they are currently taking. The students will meet with the instructor over the semester to complete it; in-class activities will also support this project. We will meet very early in the semester to discuss the topic and plan future meetings. In later meetings, we will focus on (1) revising the paper itself, (2) developing a plan to mobilize other campus resources to help complete the paper (reference librarians, Academic Support Center or library workshops, Writing Lab or Writing Center, meeting with the content professor, etc.), and (3) checking up on how you are using those resources. (The paper’s length will be a function of content course requirements).

**Goals:** To build on previous assignments (research, organization, attribution), refine interpretation skills, create an explicit and arguable thesis, further develop organization and in-text attribution skills, mobilize a network to successfully complete an assignment through to the proofreading stage. Because you are using a paper that you have to write for another class, you’re not doing more work, just ensuring that this paper is especially strong.

**Note:** You must get permission from your content professor to use a paper from their course for graded work in this class. This formal permission ensures we comply with AU’s Academic Integrity Code. Keep a copy of the permission letter and give one to me. A permission letter template is provided on Blackboard.

**Reflection on a Content Course Writing Assignment  Due Dec 4, 2012**

Students will reflect on a writing assignment completed for a content course (this assignment must be different than the major paper discussed above). Students will turn in the final, graded copy of the paper, along with a reflection discussing their successes and challenges with the assignment, how they planned for it, and how they used their support network to complete it. They will also reflect on what they would do differently to accomplish similar assignments in the future. One component of this reflection could be a timeline describing their plan for the project and the actions they took to complete it. Students can turn this in at any time during the second half of the semester. (2-3 pages)

**Goal:** To identify and understand personal challenges and successes in academic writing and to be able to apply learning from this course to other situations and projects.

**Participation  Daily**

Because a large part of this course is based on in-class activities and discussion, participation and attendance will be carefully monitored and account for a significant portion of the course grade. You are expected to attend every class and to come to class on time. Multiple absences will result in a reduction in the participation grade, and being late counts as 1/2 of an absence. If you know in advance you will miss class or be late, please e-mail me prior to the start of class that day.

Participation will involve both in-class activities (discussions, peer editing, etc.) and homework projects that may require students to complete Blackboard postings or interact with professors, campus support staff, and other students in ways to help them (1) succeed in assignments for their program of study and (2) become integrated members of their program, department, and campus communities.
Evaluation
While this course does not grant credit toward graduation, the grade is reported on students’ transcripts. The grade for this course is broken down into the following components:

**Written Products 60%**
- Analytic essay (10%)
- Literature review (15%)
- Major paper from content course (25%)
- Reflection paper (10%)

**Personal Support System Assignments 15%**
- Semester action plan (5%)
- Academic support system assignment (10%)

**Participation 25%**
- Attendance and punctuality (10%)
- Active class participation and reflective journals (15%)

**Total 100%**

**Course Policies**
You are subject to the Academic Integrity Code of American University. See [http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm - list](http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm) for more information. All work submitted must be your own or must be properly documented. Check your AU e-mail account regularly for course announcements. Announcements will also be available on Blackboard. Please turn off the ringer on your cell phone before entering the classroom. This class is meant to make your academic life easier! If you are experiencing any difficulties, please visit me during office hours or make an appointment to see me.

**Resources**
Additional links are provided in the “Resources” section of course’s Blackboard page. The [Academic Support Center](http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and [services for international students](http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm). The [Writing Lab](http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm) provides individual writing assistance sessions and group writing workshops.
## Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content focus</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>Course intro; Goals and expectations</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>Approaches to Academic Writing</td>
<td>AWGS Unit One</td>
<td>Action plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>Perceptions of American Academic Life</td>
<td>Language Literacy Life blog</td>
<td>Reflective Journal 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Building Support Systems and Affinity Groups</td>
<td>ISSSS Website</td>
<td>Academic support system essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/25</td>
<td>Problem-Solution Writing</td>
<td>AWGS Unit Three</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>Selecting and Evaluating Sources</td>
<td>TBD (Blackboard)</td>
<td>Reflective Journal 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>Writing summaries</td>
<td>AWGS Unit Five</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Synthesizing summaries</td>
<td>TBD (Blackboard)</td>
<td>Analytic Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Writing critiques</td>
<td>AWGS Unit Six</td>
<td>Reflective Journal 3</td>
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<td>10/30</td>
<td>Revision workshop/conferences</td>
<td>AWGS Unit Seven</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>Conducting Research</td>
<td>Purdue OWL Subject Specific Writing</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<td>11/13</td>
<td>Constructing a Researched Paper</td>
<td>AWGS Unit Eight</td>
<td>Reflective Journal 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>No class (Friday classes meet instead)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>Revision workshop/conferences</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Major Paper from a Content Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/4</td>
<td>Final paper presentation/Portfolio construction</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Reflection on a Content Course Writing Assignment</td>
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