

## Course Syllabus

### English 101C: Critical Thinking and Composition

---

**Instructor:** Professor Alison Kuehner

**Phone/Voice Mail:** 979-7436

**Office:** Room 2321

**E-mail:** [akuehner@ohlone.edu](mailto:akuehner@ohlone.edu)

**Mailbox, Bldg. 1:** # 369

---

**Office Hours:** MW 10:00-11:00am --No appt. needed, just drop in!

**ELC Hours:** Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Hyman Hall, 9-11am & 12:30-1:00pm  
I'm the English instructor in the ELC, available to help students

#### **Books:**

---

Books are listed in the order in which we will read them in class. These books can be purchased in the Ohlone College bookstore, or in most any good bookstore.

- Freakonomics, by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner
- Collapse, by Jared Diamond
- The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life, by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray

These books are all written by academics for a layperson audience. By carefully reading and analyzing the arguments and writing style, you will learn how to read, write, and argue effectively. You will also better understand the conventions of academic writing and argumentation.

#### **Course Description:**

---

Designed to continue the work in reading and composition started in English 101A, English 101C emphasizes critical analysis, logical thinking, and writing effective arguments. The class will focus on writing complex essays, incorporating research and other sources into papers, and creative or original ways to express ideas in writing.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

---

The student will:

1. Explain the differences between effective, valid argumentation and unclear and/or invalid reasoning.
2. Identify common logical fallacies and examples of fallacious reasoning.
3. Write out-of-class and/or in-class, well-organized critical essays that state clear and arguable theses and which are supported by logical argumentation and sufficient evidence.
4. Recognize both deductive and inductive forms of reasoning and present and defend either orally or in written form ideas in a clear and logical manner.
5. Analyze and criticize ideas from or about specific nonfiction works.
6. Present clear, precise, and accurate oral analyses (including summary, critique, evaluation, synthesis) of critical thinking concepts or of specific works through activities such as Socratic questioning, discussions, oral reports, presentations, or debates.
7. Write informally on topics by showing an awareness of tone, audience, and support for one's conclusions.
8. Clearly explain the differences between knowledge/fact and opinion in the student's own writing and in others' works.

### **Reading & Homework Assignments:**

---

Come to class having read the assigned material and prepared for discussion. To sharpen your argumentative and writing skills, you often will be asked to write about the readings. Sometimes this means homework; other times writing will be done in class. These reading and writing assignments will help you develop critical thinking skills, generate ideas for essays, and practice good writing. Since this is a three-unit class, count on a minimum of **six hours of homework a week**.

I will read your homework or in-class writings and return these to you with comments. Also, you will receive points for your work, as follows:

- **4+ (5 pts.)** = Writing addresses the topic or question assigned; ideas are well developed and thoughtfully discussed; appropriate supporting examples from the readings or from other sources are used. Writing is organized, articulate, and relatively error-free.
- **4 (4 pts.)** = Writing shows thought, effort and an understanding of the topic; examples are used to support ideas, but may skip from one idea to the next or not fully explain or support some ideas. Writing is clear and competent, although there may be some errors.
- **4 -(3 pts)** = Writing is not clearly focused on the topic or question, or suggests a lack of understanding of the reading or of the assignment. A check minus may be given if the writing is poor or includes frequent or serious errors.
- **0 (0 pts.)** = Writing not on assigned material or topic. Ideas are not at all developed or incoherently written with many errors.

**NOTE:** Late homework or class work will lose one point and must be submitted the following class session to receive credit.

### **Paper Assignments:**

---

There will be three out-of-class essays. We will review the topics and requirements for each writing assignment before the papers are due.

- Out of class papers must be typed or computer printed. Use regular paper, double space, and leave 1" margins all around. Staple pages together in the upper left-hand corner, and no plastic folders, please. Follow MLA guidelines (the documentation style you learned in English 101A) to format essays.
- E-mailed or faxed papers will not be accepted.
- Essays must be presented to the instructor or written in class on the due date.
- You may turn in one late paper without a penalty.
- Anyone missing more than one paper, or receiving a less than passing grade (C- is the lowest passing grade) on two or more essays will not pass the class.
- If an essay is returned marked "R", it must be rewritten for a grade. Please make an appointment with me to discuss how to revise the paper. If the paper is not rewritten within two weeks, the grade will automatically revert to a "D".
- Save all papers until the end of the year. If there is a disagreement about the recording of a grade, you should be able to produce the paper in question. Also, it is a good idea to duplicate your essays before handing them in.
- Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, will not be tolerated. Anyone who plagiarizes a paper, whether in part or in whole from another student or from a published source, will automatically fail the course.

### **Quizzes:**

---

Periodically you will be quizzed on material we have been studying in class. Often quizzes will be announced; sometimes not. If you keep up with the readings and class work, and understand the material, you should do well on quizzes.

**Class Participation and Discussion:**

---

Critical thinking, like critical reading and writing, requires an active mind. A thoughtful, honest effort to participate in discussions--not necessarily to get the right answer, but to ask questions, to express your opinion, and to listen carefully to others-- is what is required. Some participation activities will be formal, such as student-led discussions of the readings, and some will be informal, such as daily discussions of the readings or group work. Class discussions are an opportunity for you to test and explore ideas, to share your thoughts with other students and with me, and to develop more careful thinking through verbal dialogue and debate.

**Attendance:**

---

It is necessary to attend class so you can fully understand the reading and writing assignments. If you miss more than **six hours** (or six class sessions), you will probably not receive credit for the course. Missing class is not an excuse for coming unprepared or for not doing work. Check the syllabus or contact me or a classmate to keep up with class work. It is your responsibility to withdraw if you feel you are unable to complete the course. The instructor, however, reserves the right to withdraw a student who misses too many classes or assignments.

**Grades:**

---

This is a critical thinking and composition course. Your grade is based primarily on your ability to write well and to reason logically.

**Essays:**

Freakonomics Paper	30%
Collapse Paper	30%
Bell Curve Paper	30%

**Quizzes, Homework  
& Class work**

10%

**Academic Honesty:**

---

Any student who violates the Ohlone College District Policy on Academic Honesty (reprinted below) by cheating or plagiarizing will fail the class.

As a student at Ohlone College, you are expected to pursue your course work with integrity and honesty. Academic dishonesty occurs when a student attempts to show possession of a level of knowledge or skill, which he or she does not possess. The two most common kinds of academic dishonesty are "Cheating" and "Plagiarism." Cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of dishonest, deceptive or fraudulent means. Plagiarism is representing the work of someone else as your own and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and for consulting with instructors about questions or concerns.

## Grading Standards English 101C

**A: Excellent work**, with a clear, interesting, original thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate, relevant, logically interpreted examples and details. The essay involves the reader in your thinking process and convincingly responds to alternative views, if necessary. The organization and use of transitions demonstrate you have considered how you can most effectively present your ideas to the reader. When quotes or summaries are used they are smoothly integrated into your own argument and properly documented. An A paper is characterized by sophisticated control of language. The sentence structure is sufficiently complex and varied to express the complexity of your thoughts and sufficiently forceful to engage the reader's attention; word choices are lively, precise, and appropriate; and the essay is virtually free of errors. In other words, an A paper is not just good but outstanding in quality of thought and use of language.

**B: Very good work**, with a clear, unified thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate, relevant evidence and examples. The essay convincingly supports and explains your thinking. The organization and transitions are logical, though they may not be as consistently effective as in an A paper. When sources are used, they are appropriately documented and do not take the place of your own thinking. The B paper is characterized by competent use of language. The sentence structure is not overly simple or monotonous; word choices are generally precise and appropriate; the essay is free of significant errors. The B paper may have some outstanding qualities but be marked by flaws that keep it from being an A (for example, it may present a challenging thesis, but fail to present enough convincing evidence for support); or it may be all-around good work, but lacking the complexity of thought and sophisticated control of language characteristic of excellence.

**C: Satisfactory work**, with a clear, unified thesis supported by adequate evidence and examples. The C paper is coherently organized, though it may lack smooth transitions. When sources are used, they are appropriate, but they may sometimes overwhelm your own argument or be clumsily introduced. The prose is generally clear and fluent; it may contain some, but not overwhelming, errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure. The C paper may be good in some respects but weak in others (for example, it may be written in lively, competent prose but leave gaps in its argument), or it may simply be an adequate response to the assignment.

**D: Not passing work**; not yet satisfactory. The D paper has a focus but may lack a clear thesis, coherent development, or clear organization. It may support the thesis with logical fallacies rather than convincing evidence, or may depend on faulty emotional appeals rather than facts and reasoned arguments. It may also contain repeated and distracting errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure. Sources are used honestly, but may not be adequately or appropriately cited.

**F: Failing work**. The F paper may be unfocused, incoherent, and/or plagued by many serious errors, particularly faulty logic and incorrect grammar; or it may simply fail to meet the assignment. Plagiarism (using material from another source and not giving that source credit), whether copying from a classmate or a published source, will receive an F.