The University of Maryland, College Park
College of Education

EDHI 788: SEMINAR ON ACADEMIC WRITING
FALL, 2012

Instructor: Thomas E. Davis, Ph.D., davisth4@umd.edu
Office Hours: After class and by appointment.
Phone: (301) 405-1514

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For those of us in education, writing is an ongoing, lifelong process full of criticism, self-doubt, revision, frustration, and occasionally, satisfaction. The purpose of this course is not to make perfect writers. Rather, the goal is to give candidates some helpful strategies with which to approach and write a dissertation. These strategies involve critically analyzing the literature, identifying the logic of arguments, developing arguments, displaying and explaining results, and drawing meaningful conclusions. This is all done under the aegis of rhetoric: persuading the reader of the thesis.

The course will involve some instruction on the skills of writing and the process of revision. In addition, candidates will be afforded numerous opportunities to practice these skills in the writing lab sessions of the course. We will also look at some examples of elegant and graceful writing and discuss our impressions from a technical perspective. Finally, candidates will be expected to develop and revise the problem of the practice brief they completed in the Seminar on School District Leadership.

One element of writing that is far more common in the academy than in administrative writing and personal correspondence is the need to give and receive critical feedback. In order to foster that skill, candidates will be expected to share their writing with the class and recommend revisions to their fellow writers. Writing is a very personal endeavor and in can be rather jarring to have someone criticize your work. Let’s face it: Everything made perfect sense to you when you wrote it. Having someone tell you that there’s a problem, well, what is she, an idiot? The fact is that there is a great deal to be gained from opening yourself up to criticism and I’m asking everyone to be cognizant of one another’s vulnerability and provide constructive suggestions with a positive tone.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

Candidates will demonstrate the ability to:

- Write correct English including punctuation, grammar, and appropriate word use;
- Avoid academic jargon, nominalizations, Latinate constructions, and the awkward use of the passive voice and third person;
- Focus on actors and active verbs;
Write clearly, concisely, logically, systematically, and rigorously;
Develop their own voice with care to strike a delicate balance between authority and deference;
Understand sentence rhythm and emphasis;
Integrate quotations and cite sources;
Frame and develop an argument;
Provide evidence by integrating data, explaining their significance, and showing results;
State a problem, evaluate and summarize literature relevant to that problem, propose an investigation of the problem, and summarize the results of that investigation.

COURSE METHODS AND REQUIREMENTS

It is assumed that every class member will:
- Do the course reading;
- Complete assignments in a timely fashion;
- Provide thoughtful suggestions in the critiques of fellow candidates’ work;
- Contribute freely and meaningfully to class discussions.

REQUIRED TEXT


Recommended Reading:


All other course readings will be available on the Blackboard website.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All papers should be submitted double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and adhere to the formatting outlined in APA 6th edition. Late assignments will only be accepted with prior approval of the instructor. Electronic submissions in Microsoft Word are required. We will use the track changes function as we revise and comment on one another’s work. The main focus of this course will be each candidate’s problem of the practice brief. Throughout the course candidates will revise and expand their brief, submit them for peer review, and ultimately turn them in as their final paper.

E-Journal
Candidates should complete a brief (250-350 words) reflection on each Saturday’s discussion piece(s). What did you take away from our discussion? Do you agree with the author’s point? Why or why not? What did you learn that you might try to incorporate into your own writing and why? I would like your impressions while they are fresh in your mind, so candidates should post their reflections on their Blackboard e-journal by midnight of the Monday following the class discussion.

Peer Reviews
After the first (11/3/12) and third (12/1/12) Saturdays, candidates will be assigned a peer reviewer. They should e-mail the latest version of their POP brief to the reviewer. All reviews are due to me by midnight of the Thursday before the next class meeting (due 11/9/12 and 12/6/12, respectively). Reviewers should track changes and add comments in the margin and/or make revisions directly in the text. They should send the revised version to the author and to me.

Midterm
After the Saturday, November 10 class meeting, I will post the take-home midterm on Blackboard. It will consist of a piece of literature. Candidates will be expected to identify the author’s thesis, summarize the main arguments, evaluate the credibility of evidence, and summarize the conclusion. The midterm document will include more details regarding the form
and length of the assignment. Candidates should do their own papers. The midterm will be due by Wednesday, November 21 at midnight. Candidates should submit their papers to me electronically as an e-mail attachment in MS Word.

**Final Paper**
The focus of the course is to help candidates prepare to write their dissertations. In order to make the writing for the course relevant to that end, the purpose of the final paper is to help candidates convert the problem of the practice brief from EDHI 767 into a draft of their introductory chapter of their dissertation. The final paper should be 12-15 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and adhere to the formatting outlined in APA 6th edition.
EMERGENCIES AND CAMPUS CLOSURES
The main page for emergency preparedness is http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/. For things like inclement weather, I will use e-mail to notify you when the university is closed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
All candidates are to abide by the university's code of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism will be reported to the Student Honor Council. The full text of the Code of Academic Integrity can be found at http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to discuss the course material and paper assignments with one another. Moreover, candidates are expected to read and encouraged to incorporate peer recommendations in their revisions. However, candidates should complete all written assignments individually and the ideas therein should be their own, unless duly cited.

CLASS CONDUCT
I encourage an open exchange of ideas. All candidates should feel comfortable voicing their opinions and sharing their interpretations of the readings. Moreover, no one candidate should dominate the discussions. The authors we will discuss espouse a variety of perspectives. I ask that you come to class with an open mind and a willingness to contribute to class discussions. Above all, I expect candidates to listen to what others have to say.

DISABILITY-BASED ACCOMMODATIONS
Any class member who has a documented disability and wishes to discuss academic accommodations should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES
Candidates will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, candidates will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is the candidate’s responsibility to inform the instructor as soon as possible of any intended absences for religious observances.

COURSE EVALUATION
Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a candidate member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. You can go directly to the CourseEvalUM website to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing the summary reports for thousands of courses online at Testudo.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. Clarity

Friday, November 2, 2012
Introductions
Discuss the syllabus and the assignments
Discuss clarity

Required Reading:

Saturday, November 3, 2012
Writing lab: Academic writing
Discussion: Usage

Discussion pieces:

Week 2. Grace

Friday, November 9, 2012
Discuss grace and clarity of form

Required Reading:

Saturday, November 10, 2012
Writing lab: Literature reviews
Discussion: Example of style and grace

Discussion piece:
Week 3. Research

Friday, November 30, 2012
Getting started and making good arguments

Required Reading:

Saturday, December 1, 2012
Writing lab: Dissertation proposals
Discussion: Writing well

Discussion piece:

Week 4. Drafting Your Thesis

Friday, December 7, 2012
Planning and drafting your thesis

Required Reading:

Saturday, December 8, 2012
Writing lab: Results and discussion sections
Discussion: Another example of style and grace

Discussion piece:
GRADING

1. Class engagement
   a. Substantive contributions to class discussions (10 points)
   b. Two thoughtful peer reviews (10 points ea. = 20 points)

2. Class assignments
   a. Electronic journal reflections (5 points ea. = 20 points)
   b. Midterm exam (20 points)
   c. Final paper (30 points)

Grades will be determined based on the following scale:

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