



# ENGL 101: Persuasive Writing Course Syllabus



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**Instructor:** Mr. David M. Merchant  
**Office:** GTMH 274  
**Phone:** (318) 257-5250  
**E-mail:** merchant@latech.edu  
**Office Hours:** Check Moodle

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## Course Description, Objectives, and Theme

### Prerequisites

ACT score of 18 or above. It is your responsibility to make sure you are in the right class. You will also need basic computer and Internet skills before taking this class. It is assumed that you already have some basic knowledge and skill in grammar, punctuation, style, and usage as well as a willingness to identify and work on your own problem areas in and outside of class.

College is not high school – we want you to level up. High school is like playing the video game *Mass Effect (ME)* in Casual (Easy) Mode. That is a good level for a beginner, but with college you are entering higher education – thus a higher level. Entering college, then, is like playing *ME* in Normal Mode, without any cheat codes, with the goal of having you play at Veteran Mode (Hard), without cheat codes or even walkthroughs, by the time you graduate. You will need to access previously learned skills and then build on them to level up.

*“When I was a child, I spoke like a child and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish ways.” – 1:Cor:13:11 (New Living Translation)*

Do not expect Freshman English classes to be plug-and-play, paint-by-the-numbers, or rote memorization classes. We expect you to learn to critically think, and to incorporate and synthesize and not just regurgitate information or mimic procedures. Thus, it should be no surprise that what passed for an A in high school will *not* pass for an A in college.

### Definition

This class is a course in expository writing: writing that persuasively explains, clarifies, or argues. It involves *independent critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis* – skills required by all university majors and all engaged citizens of a democracy.

### Objectives

Knowing how to write helps you become a better thinker – to be more organized in your thinking, and to be more capable of being able to express yourself and to persuade others. Being a better writer will give you tools for understanding complex texts and ideas—and for exploring your own thoughts and experiences. In practicing writing you will learn to think about your audience, the needs of the situation, and the goals you have, and piece them carefully together. In addition, because reading and writing are inextricably linked, critical reading is important to being a better writer. The course objectives that support these learning goals are as follows:

1. Read with comprehension and analyze (in discussion and writing) a variety of works anthologized in the course textbook.
2. Use logic to evaluate and communicate in class discussion and in writing the effectiveness of various arguments.
3. Understand and apply proper MLA (Modern Language Association) parenthetical and Works Cited format in the use of integrated primary and secondary sources.
4. Practice revision and self-editing of essays, and communicate effectively in standard written English.
5. In addition to becoming self-editors, one general university objective is for you to become self-initiated lifelong learners by the time you graduate. Most professional occupations require good written communication skills.

Another thing to keep in mind is that this is not a stand-alone course; what you learn in this class you will apply in other courses across the curriculum (in other words, many non-English courses will require writing quality essays and research papers). And so you can say that another objective for this class is to prepare you for writing in your other courses. You *will* be challenged in this course, but I suspect in a good way. Be open to the learning process, stretch yourself, and absorb all of the nuances of the material. It will serve you well as you proceed throughout your education.

### Themes

Many class readings and discussions will be centered on philosophical discussions, mostly regarding definition of abstract or complex concepts or ideas. Like onions (or green ogres), such concepts have many layers, and, when investigated, often lead to more questions. Why focus on definition? Effective academic, professional, and technical communications depend upon shared definitions, and most arguments can be distilled to a definition argument or contain a definition argument as a key component – getting your readers to accept your definition of a topic is a major step toward getting them to accept your overall argument.

To help write effective persuasive arguments, other readings and discussions will center on perception/audience analysis. To effectively persuade, you need to understand your audience's perspective or point of view as well as to better understand your own; this includes finding the gaps not only in your audience's thinking, but in your own as well.

*"The moment we want to believe something, we suddenly see all the arguments for it, and become blind to the arguments against it." – George Bernard Shaw*

Your essays will have a selection of topics to choose from, not an anything goes selection. First, while I want you to write what interests you, I have to balance that with being able to grade as objectively as possible. There are some topics which I will probably not be able to grade objectively enough and those topics will have to remain off the table. Second, I know the propensity of students to pick the least challenging subject. That may be fine for high school or below, but not for college. Third, if everyone picked a different topic, class discussions will lose their effectiveness and helpfulness toward writing your papers. As with all English classes, you will be asked to think!

*"An opinion should be the result of thought, not a substitute for it." – Jef Mallett*

If having a class centered on philosophical themes is as fun to you as having a root canal without anesthesia, then you may want to switch to another instructor. But I hope you will stay and open your mind to possibilities. I hope for this class to engage and stretch our minds, and keep us active in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.

## Course Materials

*The McGraw-Hill Reader: Issues across the Disciplines*, 12th ed. Gilbert H. Muller. New York: McGraw Hill. 2013. ISBN: 978-0073405988. **Note:** Make sure it is the 12th edition. Different editions contain different readings.

*Freshman Composition Course Packet, 2015 - 2016.* **Note:** Available only at the Louisiana Tech Bookstore: <<http://latech.bncollege.com/>>. This packet is revised yearly.

I recommend you have a dictionary and a thesaurus. Also, you will need reliable, readily available access to your Tech email account and the Moodle system. To access Moodle, you will use the same user ID and password required to access your Tech email. To obtain your Tech email, visit the Computing Center, with your Tech ID, and request your user ID and password.

## About Your Instructor

I welcome you to our class and hope for a stimulating and productive term. I am Mr. David M. Merchant, your assigned instructor. The following is the extent of my credentials:

- 2009 Graduate Certificate, Technical Writing (Louisiana Tech University)
- 2006 MA, English Literature (Louisiana Tech University)
- 1997 MS, Information Science (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
- 1992 BA, English Literature (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
- 1984 Certification, Naval Nuclear Power Plant Operator (US Navy)

My work experience includes US Navy electrician and nuclear engineering technician, Web master, systems librarian, and technology specialist. Presently I am employed as a full-time Instructor of English and Technology Coordinator for the School of Literature and Language.

## Attendance Policy

Those who are often late or absent do not do well in the class. Plus, Tech regards attendance an obligation: <<http://www.latech.edu/administration/policies-and-procedures/2206.shtml>>. The University seeks to prepare students for leadership; learning to plan responsibly regarding vacations and appointments that take one away from work is part of maturing toward leadership.

Treat this class in a professional manner, as if you were showing up to a professional employment position. Most organizations require punctual and regular attendance for promotion or for continued employment. You may be lucky and find an organization that does not care about attendance, but it makes reasoned, logical sense for me to prepare you for the typical scenario. Since helping students develop a stronger sense of responsibility for their choices is promoted by

accountability, there are non-negotiable penalties for showing up late and for being absent. So show up consistently on time and *prepared*.

Schedule all doctor, court, and advising appointments at times that do not conflict with class.

### **Taking Roll**

Attendance is recorded at the *start* of class. For online classes, class attendance is taken via timely participation in assigned forums, completion of quizzes, or submissions of drafts.

### **Tardies and Early Departures**

For on-campus classes: if you are late and miss roll, it is your responsibility to make sure you are marked late and not as absent by seeing me after class; the next class period is too late. In a professional work environment, consistent tardiness often leads to being fired, or being passed over for promotion. Punctuality is a courtesy to me and your fellow students. Late students are an interruption and a distraction. Punctual attendance is a university requirement, and as adults you will be held responsible should you fail to meet that requirement.

Because there can sometimes be understandable reasons for being late, the first three tardies are overlooked. Do not be tempted to nonchalantly use these passes as you cannot predict if and when you will really need to use them; it is OK to end the quarter without using them, for keep in mind that after three tardies, **each additional tardiness incurs a 1% deduction from your final grade**. Leaving class for the day before class is officially dismissed counts the same as being late (you can, of course, take restroom breaks).

### **Absences**

In a professional work environment, being frequently absent often leads to being fired. While there are sometimes understandable reasons for missing class, absences have a negative effect on the class as well as on your learning process. Therefore, this course has a strict attendance policy: **you can miss the equivalent of one week of classes (two meetings for twice a week schedule, three for a thrice a week schedule, and three for a summer schedule) without any penalties and no questions asked**. Consider this your "sick leave" allowance and use it *judiciously* as each additional absence, *regardless* of reason, will incur a 3% deduction from your final grade for *each* absence. After two weeks of absences (one week for summer quarters) you will fail the course no matter what your current class standing is. You are responsible for keeping count of your absences.

This may especially be an issue if you are a member of two activities, a sports team and a choir for example. Since you made the choice of being on two time consuming activities you have the responsibility to make certain that the combination does not take you out of class more than two weeks. If you know you are going to be out more than two weeks (one week for summer), or are likely to be, you should drop the class before the drop/add date, and take the class at a later time when your schedule will allow you to attend regularly. Remember, I look at you as adults who are working on the goal of becoming professionals; helping you develop a stronger sense of responsibility is promoted by accountability.

**No exceptions.** While I will empathize or sympathize with you, I cannot give an exception. Blame it on bad luck, the psychic manipulations of Cthulhu, or the indifference of a chaotic

universe. It happens to the best of us (I have been there more than a few times myself).

**Incompletes.** If the excessive absences occur at the end of the quarter, there is a chance we can arrange an incomplete. However, the English Department is quite restrictive regarding incompletes.

## Absent / Tardy Instructor Policy

If I am not be able to attend class, notices of the absence will be posted on the classroom door(s) and on Moodle. If the absence arises at the last minute, someone from the English Department office will come and let you know. In any event, class will continue through Moodle. Do not assume class is cancelled if I am not there at the start of class; give me 20 minutes after which it is up to your discretion to stay or to leave (without penalty, of course).

## Expectation of Outside-of-Class Work

This college level writing course requires a lot of work – in class and outside of class. Each student should devote a substantial number of hours per week towards the assignments so that ample time is allowed to complete them accurately and effectively. Do not expect an “inflation” of the grade based on effort. The work will speak for itself; therefore, well done work is received as such, while mediocre work is treated with mediocrity. If you find you are dedicating a substantial number of hours outside of class to assignments and are still struggling, please come see me to discuss your concerns.

*“There’s a difference between interest and commitment. When you’re interested in doing something, you do it only when it’s convenient. When you’re committed to something, you accept no excuses; only results.” – Kenneth Blanchard*

Writing is an involved process for any writer. To do well in this class, you must commit to it.

## Assignments

### Essays

Three short essays, and one major persuasive definition argument essay, make up 70% of your grade. Essays will have a minimum page or word count - I will not count quotes as part of your page or word count (you will not be able to pad your paper with quotes to get away with less original writing). Essay topics are assigned; any essay not on an assigned topic will receive zero credit. Papers missing a required Works Cited page will fail. Plagiarized papers will receive a zero grade.

### Peer Reviews/Writing Workshops

For Peer Reviews you must have a typed, double-spaced, rough draft of sufficient length (more than a couple of paragraphs). An inadequate rough draft will lower your assignment grade by 5%, while a missing rough draft will lower it by 10%. For writing workshops, you must bring a full, typed copy of the section of your paper that is the focus of the workshop.

## Quizzes

Quizzes will make up 5% of your grade. Some quizzes will be online, via Moodle. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes (even for University approved absences). However, the lowest quiz score is dropped.

## Writing Center

Attending the Writing Center will make up 5% of your grade. Each visit is 1%, therefore you need to visit at least 5 times. I am informed by the Writing Center every time you attend (even when attending via Skype). For more information, see the Writing Center section below.

## Discussion and in-class exercises

Discussion, in-class and via online forums, and in-class exercises will account for 20% of your grade.

## Paper Guidelines (Style Sheet)

1. We use MLA style for formatting and documentation.
2. Use American English for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.
3. Typed papers are to be in a standard (for example, Times New Roman, Calibri) size 12 font; handwritten papers will not be accepted (except for in-class assignments).
4. In-class papers must be written in black or blue ink.
5. Use standard 8 ½" by 11" white paper.
6. All essays must be double-spaced and use margins of ONE inch for all margins.
7. Number pages using the header page # function (½ inch from the top and flush with the right margin). Put your last name before the page number.
8. Do not bold, italicize, underline, or place your essay title in quotation marks; exception: use italics or quotation marks when referring to other works in your title. Write the title in Title Case, not in all capital letters.
9. Do not use a cover sheet.
10. You can sparingly (only when absolutely necessary) use italics and exclamation marks for emphasis. Try to use no more than one exclamation mark per essay.
11. Use the serial, or Oxford, comma (comma placed after next to last list item and before the "and"); for example: item 1, item 2, and item 3.
12. Use charts, tables, or other illustrations if they help your reader understand your text better. (How to use illustrations in your writing will be discussed in class.)
13. Use the following format for the first page:

Page number, in Arabic numeral(s)

Last Name #

Your Full Name: First Last

English 101 - section number

Mr. Merchant

Date in month day, year format (e.g., May 21, 2011)

Essay #

Your Original Title

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut “Klaatu barada nikto!” Gort quis nostrud “treguna, mekoides, et tracorumsatis dee.” Sed eiusmod elit.

Note space between name and page number.

Do not bold, italicize, underline, or place the essay title in quotation marks; exception: use italics or quotation marks when referring to other works in your title. Write the title in Title Case.

14. Place any end notes on a separate page before your Works Cited page. Entitle the section Notes, with the title centered.
15. Works Cited page begins at the top of a page, after the last page of your essay or after your Notes section. The title “Works Cited” is centered.
16. Any hard copies submitted must be stapled (and no, I do not bring a stapler).

## Grading Standards and Grading Points Distribution

Employers take a negative view of poor writing and communication skills, especially for a degreed professional. Your work and your ideas will be judged in no small part by how well you communicate in your profession. Consequently, my standards for are high. Your level of work you perform is expected to build and improve with each assignment.

### Grading Method

Since one course goal is for you to continue becoming self-learners and self-editors, while I will count off for each error I find, I will not mark in a document every specific instance of every type of error. I will give helpful comments, however, to help you revise. You will then need to review your graded document to find and correct the errors. During class workshops, I can help you help yourself in this matter; I also *strongly* recommend that you regularly visit the Writing Center. Remember, assignments build upon on another. Proofread repeatedly: for instance, proofread for content, proofread for style and formatting, proofread for grammar, and then proofread for punctuation. Do not wait until the last minute to work on an assignment. And do not wait to the last minute to visit the Writing Center (they can fill up).

## Scoring

Your final score converts to a grade by this formula:

A = 90 - 100%

B = 80 - 89%

C = 70 - 79%

D = 60 - 69%

F = 0 - 59%

Plagiarism = 0%

The grade you earn on a paper is not a cumulative grade, nor does it assess your character. Grades are not negotiable. Keep track of your grades; stay aware of your progress.

## My Philosophy Regarding Bonus Points and Rounding Up

*Bonus points* are too often abused (“I can skip that quiz because I can do a bonus later”), are used by some to perform an easier chore to make up for not putting as much energy into a harder chore, and can end up inflating grades unfairly.

*Rounding up* is likewise unfair. For example, one diligent student gets an 80 for a final grade while another diligent student gets a 79 for a final grade. Both have impartially earned the grades that they have. To round up the 79 to an 80 is unfair to the one who earned the 80, for the extra grade given from the rounding up is not one that is earned.

“But it’s just a few tenths of a point!” This course is based on 1,000 points. An A is at least 900 points. A 79.4 grade is 79.4 percent of 1,000 points. Adding 0.6 points, whether by bonus work or rounding up, to the final grade is actually adding 0.6 percent, which is the same as giving 6 course points. Not much? Six points is the equivalent of adding more than half a letter grade to a short essay assignment (worth 100 course points). In the 79 to 80 example above, such rounding up would be the equivalent of adding a full letter grade to the short essay assignment, which is blatantly unfair to the person who worked hard to earn their 80.

## Rubric

Each major spelling or grammar error costs 3% of the total assignment grade (that is, 3% for each occurrence of a major error). A major error is one that negatively affects the syntax of a sentence, or the sentence’s technical, denotational, or rhetorical meaning. Minor errors cost 1% per instance.

Each major formatting error (very noticeable or affect readability) can cost up to 5% of the total assignment grade, depending upon whether the error affects one page, or the entire assignment. Minor formatting errors cost 1% per error. Again, you will not be able to write at the last minute and expect to do well. You must learn to draft, review, revise, and edit as a normal part of professional writing.

Missing a required Works Cited page or missing parenthetical citations will earn an F for the assignment as it is technically plagiarism. Missing both will earn a zero (0) for the assignment. Copying someone else’s work or having someone write your essay will earn you a zero and a referral to the Honor Council.

An incomplete assignment will earn an F.

An incomplete Works Cited (only Web links, for instance, and no other information), will cost 15% of the total assignment grade.

Check the *Freshman Composition Course Packet* for the Department of English's policies regarding evaluation of work, which I closely follow.

Finally, I also grade according to the Olympic Diving criteria: Degree of Difficulty and Quality of Execution. Do something difficult, but miss one or two areas of perfection, you will get more points than someone who selects a very simple project and does it flawlessly.

### Revision

If you score an F or a D on the *first* essay, you may rewrite it for a chance to increase its grade to a C. You must go to the Writing Center and receive help with the rewriting (online classes can contact the Writing Center via Skype). Include with your revision (a separate page after your works cited page) the following:

- A brief (two to three paragraphs) statement describing the major revisions you made and commenting on the reasons that you made these changes.
- A brief reflection about what you learned as a result of the process of revising.

You must submit your rewrite to Turnitin.com *within* one week after your first writing assignment grade is posted. No rewrites will be accepted after (sorry, no exceptions). To be fair to other students, first essay assignments that are not submitted, are submitted incomplete, or are plagiarized, are not eligible to be rewritten.

### So, what is an A paper?

An A paper is better than good, it is *excellent*. It is an outstanding paper that is difficult to further improve. It is the result of effort and dedication to the writing process. It not only fulfills the assignment on time, it rises *above* basic expectations, demonstrating insight and originality (not mere mimicry) and evidence of great attention to detail. It correctly adheres to American English grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage. It follows the formatting requirements for the assignment exactly. The information is presented ethically, qualitatively, clearly, and comprehensively in an easy and persuasive manner. The reader feels not only satisfactorily informed, but meaningfully taught as well. It is excellent in every grading criteria. It is like Mary Poppins: Practically Perfect in Every Way.

Remember, we want you to “level up” – what passed for an A in high school will not pass for an A in college.

### Grade appeals

In case of student grade appeals, I keep all unreturned papers for 30 days into the next quarter. In the event of a question regarding a final grade, it will be the responsibility of the student to retain and present graded materials that have been returned during the quarter.

## Grading Points Distribution

Assignment	Points
Short Essay – Compare/Contrast: 1½ – 2 pages (+ any Works Cited)	100 points
Short Essay – Process Analysis: 1½ – 2 pages (+ any Works Cited)	100 points
Short Essay – Causal Analysis: 1½ – 2 pages (+ any Works Cited)	100 points
Persuasive Definition Argument Planning Sheet	50 points
Persuasive Definition Argument Rough Draft: Introduction (include a Works Cited page if you quote material in your introduction). Works as a	100 points
Persuasive Definition Argument Final Draft: At least 1,000 words (not including quoted material) + Works Cited. At least 2 sources.	250 points
Quizzes (lowest quiz score dropped)	50 points
Writing Center Visits	50 points
Discussion (in-class and Moodle forums) and in-class exercises	200 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

## Final Notes on Grading

The first paper in writing classes usually causes a lot of hurt feelings. Before the first grades are in, your instructor is Obi Wan, Yoda, or maybe even Jar-Jar Binks. Then the first grade is posted and your instructor is revealed to be Darth Vader. The first set of grades are usually bad because you do not know how high the grading bar is yet. You do not know how high the bar is until you run up to it and try to jump over. If you get knocked down on the first paper, dust yourself off and get up again. Use it as a diagnostic, and use it to improve on the next assignment. If you do well on the first paper, do not become uncritically satisfied with your work: also look to improve. Each assignment builds upon the previous, increasing in difficulty or complexity. Consequently, the grading becomes increasingly stringently. Sometimes those who do well on the first paper ease up and take a hit on the next one. Your quarter's fate has not been sealed by the first grade, one way or the other.

*“Easy reading is damned hard writing.” – Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Do not recite to me lists of reasons why you have to get an A, B, or C; I do know what it is like to be a student and to desire to make an A (I still take classes). However, while an A in my class is possible, not everyone will be able to earn one. I evaluate your coursework, not your life circumstances. I evaluate your assignment, not your worth (great people struggle with writing). You are not entitled to a grade because you are graduating or your financial aid depends upon it. You are not entitled to a grade because you have never gotten less than an A or B before. Successive courses often prove to be successively more difficult, therefore past performance is not a perfect indicator of future performance. To be fair to everyone, I must grade with no partiality. I am not hired to “give out” grades. All A grades must be earned through hard work, and not tossed out like Mardi Gras beads.

## Late Work / Make-Up

In the professional world, submission deadlines often refuse any late submissions, no matter what the reason or excuse for the late submission is; the deadlines are non-negotiable. Missing those deadlines means losing your organization a contract, a customer, or a grant. Even if there is some leeway, it is unprofessional to submit your work late, especially if others are depending on your input for their own deadlines. Missing a deadline also makes your supervisor look bad. You need to submit professional work on time. This class' late policy is to help prepare you for that (we want you to do well in the professional world).

### Late Assignments

For the above reasons, as well as to be fair to those who submit their work on time, work submitted after the due date, but before midnight of the same day, will forfeit a half-letter grade. Work submitted after midnight, but within 24 hours of the due date and time, will forfeit a full-letter grade. Work submitted after 24 hours will received an F no matter how well written they are. Again, this is not high school; we are preparing you to become mature professionals. You will find many courses at Tech will have similar, if not even stricter, policies regarding late work. One way to avoid this: never wait until the last minute.

Rare exception: If you have a verifiable university-excused absence, which you have cleared with me in advance, or a verifiable university-sanctioned family emergency absence (the Dean of Liberal Arts calls me), you can have a one-day, and one-day only, grace period from grading penalties for lateness. That is, the penalties for lateness are delayed by 24 hours.

### Quizzes, Forums, and In-Class Work

Missed quizzes, forum deadlines, and in-class work cannot be made up for any reason.

### Technical difficulties

Technical difficulties are not acceptable excuses for not having your work. Be professional and back up and save your work frequently on a thumbdrive, the cloud, or external hard drive in case of computer failure; this way you will still have your assignment and can submit it from another computer (we have several computer labs on campus) or smart device. Label and keep track of your flash drives. This will save you unnecessary stress and anguish.

## Academic Honesty

### Honor Code Statement

*Being a student of a higher standard, I pledge to embody the principles of academic integrity* (Section Two of the Louisiana Tech Academic Honor Code).

### Plagiarism Zero Tolerance

The University has a *zero* tolerance policy for plagiarism. View college instruction as if you were employed by a professional company. As an employee, you are ethically bound to perform your work with professionalism and integrity. The first occurrence of plagiarism is a grade of zero on that assignment. The second occurrence is an F for the course. It is better to submit your own incomplete or poor work than it is to submit plagiarized work.

## Plagiarism Statements

Each student must complete, sign, and turn in the Plagiarism Statement *for the current quarter* located in the current *Freshman Composition Course Packet* to me by the deadline stated in the Course Schedule. By School policy, I cannot grade a student's written work without this signed Statement submitted beforehand. The English Department places a hold on your Tech Account until the signed Statement is submitted. Online students, send the signed Statement by certified mail or delivery confirmation to the full address below:

Louisiana Tech University  
Dept. of English  
Attention: David M. Merchant  
Railroad Ave GTMH 236 (PO Box 3162)  
Ruston, LA 71272-0001

## Other Dishonesty

Dishonesty or attempts at dishonesty by false or misleading information when documenting an emergency absence is an ethical violation, and a violation of the University Academic Honor Code (Section Three) which will result in a referral to the Office of Student Life.

## Moodle and Turnitin.com

### Moodle

Tech uses the Moodle system as the central mode for course management. Check Moodle, including the News Forum, regularly and often for class updates.

### Turnitin.com

Tech uses Turnitin.com to check student papers. Instructions on using Turnitin.com are on the class Moodle page. Submit documents only in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or PDF formats as other formats may not retain the required page formatting. Most non-Microsoft word processors can save in Word format ("save as" or "export"). Do not email your papers to me as an alternative submission method. You would not ask your boss to do your work for you (at least it is not advisable to do so). Do not ask me to do your work for you.

## Writing Center and Online Writing Lab

Tech's Writing Center, located in Wily Tower Room 325, is an excellent resource for writers of all levels. You can call 257-4477 to schedule an appointment or to ask a quick grammar question during normal business hours. Online classes can set up consultations via Skype. For more information, including hours of operation, visit <<http://www.latech.edu/barc/writing-center/>>. You can work on a current assignment or on a general grammar issue.

## ESL (English as a Second Language) Writers

While some non-Western cultures tend to be indirect in their writing, Western style requires directness (candid, straightforward and to the point) and having clear examples that prove your position or opinion, as well as a preference for active voice. Also, Western cultures tend to have a

stricter definition for plagiarism – please make sure you understand the Western definition and attitude toward plagiarism as the penalties for plagiarism are harsh. I strongly recommend that ESL writers regularly use the Writing Center and the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at [owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu). A particularly good OWL section is their ELS Instructors and Students resources at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/678/01/>.

## Office Hours Policy

It is best if you setup an appointment with me prior to visiting my office to ensure that you are not interrupted or rushed from my office by another student. Preferably, make these appointments after class or by Moodle messaging. If you phone me during my office hours, I may not be immediately available as I may be helping someone else or have temporarily stepped out. My office hours are posted on Moodle and on my office door (GTMH 274).

## Classroom Conduct Policy

Treat this class as if you are a professional employee: be focused on the job at hand and be courteous and respectful of others' time, opinions, and work. Discourteous behavior includes frequent tardiness, disrespectful or offensive language, using social media, playing games, taking phone calls, excessive side-talking, and reading irrelevant material. You need to be focused on coursework, and not on Facebook updates. If you are an EMT on call, or if you have an emergency that requires you to monitor your phone, let me know at the start of class and set your phone to vibrate. I am not anti-technology by any means. We are preparing you for the professional world, and since discourteous behavior can cause your employer to fire you, should you fail to behave appropriately, you may be dropped from the course with the grade of F.

## Computer Use Policy (GTMH 211-A / GTMH 211-B)

The computers in this classroom are only for Freshman Composition instruction and class work purposes. Take care and use the computers respectfully.

## Email/Moodle Messaging Policy

Email presents some difficulties: Tech email can be slow, and spam filters do not always work well. I check my email only a few times a day. I am, however, on Moodle a lot. The best way, then, is to contact me is via Moodle.

### Moodle Messaging

For messages you need to send only to me, use Moodle's messaging system. Use my Moodle user profile to send a message. Instructions are on Moodle.

Response to Moodle messages is within 24 hours during the school week. I do not check Moodle messages on Friday nights, Saturdays (my social media Sabbath), or holidays. Any messages sent after 5 p.m. will be addressed the next day; those sent after 5 p.m. on Friday may not be answered until Monday. (I do have a bit of a life outside of Tech.)

## Email

If you do send an email, use business etiquette: identify who you are, what class you are in, and use a helpful subject line as well. For Moodle messages, I will be automatically informed who you are and what class you are in, so you do not need to include that information.

## Do Not Send the Following Kinds of Messages

There are some types of emails/Moodle messages I will not answer; these are discussed below. Please review the following before sending me an email or Moodle message.

- *Messages that ask me to explain what will be/was discussed in class when you are absent.* This course has an assignment schedule that notates due dates and what material will be covered. Therefore, you will always be aware of where we are in the class.
- *Messages that ask me to look at or review entire assignments.* I will not read the entire draft of your work. That defeats one of the goals of this class. Have *specific* questions in mind before you contact me.
- *Messages that ask me for an extension on the due date.* To keep the integrity of the course, to prepare you for the professional world, and to be fair to your peers, I need to stick to the late policy mentioned earlier in this syllabus.
- *Messages that ask my progress in grading an assignment.* Usually, the turnover rate for receiving graded assignments during a regular quarter is a full week after it has been turned in. During summer quarters, the turnover rate is three to five days.
- *Messages that ask me to regrade because you are disappointed with your grade.* See “Final Notes on Grading” above.
- *Messages asking for a particular final grade or rounding of your final grade average.* See the “Final Notes on Grading” section above.



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

**Figure 1. "It's in the syllabus"**

Source: Cham, Jorge. "Piled Higher and Deeper." Comic strip. 31 August 2014. Web. 10 May 2013.

## Special Accommodations

If you require accommodations regarding class due to disability or other need, please see me as soon as possible; please provide a letter from the Testing and Disability Services office to me at the *beginning* of the quarter; do not wait to give me your letter. For more information about eligibility for accommodations, contact:

Testing and Disability Services  
318 Wyly Tower  
318-257-4221  
<<http://www.latech.edu/ods/>>

## Emergency Contingency Plan

If for any reason we were not able to meet as a class, we would continue with this course through our Moodle website. Please check Moodle regularly.

### Emergency Notification System

All students are encouraged to enroll and update their contact information in the Emergency Notification System at <<http://www.latech.edu/administration/ens.shtml>>. This will ensure that you will receive important text and voice alerts in the event of a campus emergency.

## Course Schedule

Assignments will be posted on Moodle in the Course Schedule folder. This schedule may (probably will) be modified during the quarter as situations warrant. Any necessary changes will be posted in the News Forum section, so check it regularly. All items marked **DUE**, **READ**, and **QUIZ** are to be finished *before* class begins, unless otherwise noted (for online classes, classes begin at 10 am). Remember, you are responsible for any changes to the schedule made by the instructor in class or posted on Moodle.

## The Trends of Student Behavior

*The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places. – Author Unknown*

There is an unfortunate trend of student behavior: self-sabotage. Having taught this course for a considerable amount of time, my experience has shown that such situations are easily avoidable. You can only imagine the number of times I have heard things like:

- “My computer crashed on me.”
- “My printer would not allow me to print the assignment how I actually formatted it.”
- “I’ve had a lot going on this quarter.”
- “A [sibling, roommate, friend] borrowed my laptop with my assignment on it.”
- “I got into a fight with my [significant other], and I just couldn’t concentrate enough to finish the assignment.”

The list goes on and on from there. Look, let us be frank. The campus has several computer labs for use. The Bulldog Achievement Resource Center (BARC<sup>1</sup>) is available for help with time management and study skills. The Counseling Center<sup>2</sup> is available for emotional or psychological health and for responsible decision-making. Bottom line: things happen, but as adults, we have responsibilities. As a university student, you should become a prudent planner, anticipating the unexpected and preparing for the worst, should it occur, to meet deadlines for assignments. Your future boss will not accept such situations as a justifiable excuse for not getting your work done.

I am very happy to assist my students. However, ***I am not going to do something that will call into question my job performance, or erode my ethical integrity or the integrity of the class.*** You are the “captains of your destinies,” and the choices you make, the situations you create, and the positive or negative consequences that arise because of them are in *your* hands and are ultimately your responsibility. Do not call on me to curve those consequences.

## Study Contract

This syllabus is a contract between you (as the student) and me (as the instructor). By taking this class, you are agreeing to follow all the guidelines given above, to be evaluated by the requirements of this syllabus, to comply with the Louisiana Tech University Honor Code, and to be responsible for your actions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.latech.edu/barc/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.latech.edu/students/counseling/>