

SAMPLE SYLLABUS  
**OPIE 575 Thesis/Dissertation Writing**

---

**Course Description**

**Required Texts:**

*English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide* by J. M. Swales & C. B. Feak (The University of Michigan Press, 2000)

ISBN: 0-472-08713-4

[S&F]

**Recommended Texts:**

1. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by J. M. Swales & C. B. Feak (The University of Michigan Press, 2005 or 2004)

ISBN: 0-472-08856-4

[AWG]

2. *Writing Up Research: Experimental Research Report Writing for Students of English* by R. Weissberg & S. Buker (Prentice Hall, 1990)

ISBN: 0-13-970831-6

[W&B]

3. *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*

**Course Overview**

This course guides students through the process of writing either their proposal, or thesis/dissertation, or an article for publication, following the guidelines/practices of their field. As such, students should only register for this course when they are ready to write up their research. Depending on student abilities, course topics generally include idea organization and development, word choice, advanced grammar, and revising their own writing. Plagiarism and citation of sources are also covered. Individualized attention is an integral part of the course.

The reading and writing assignments and in-class activities will be determined by the specific needs of the students in this class, i.e., their level of language proficiency and current knowledge of proposal and thesis/dissertation writing. Considerable attention in class is given to the rhetorical and grammatical analyses of sample thesis and dissertation proposals or chapters, while in writing conferences students discuss their own proposal or thesis/dissertation (specific chapters) writing. This course also discusses the writing conventions of various kinds of academic correspondence.

**OPIE 575 is neither a substitute for advice and direction by a thesis advisor on content nor assistance with close editing of individual writing projects. Rather it is designed to assist students in taking charge of communicating their ideas and thoughts in academic English.**

## **Objectives**

- 1) To introduce students to the research prospectus and thesis/dissertation writing process with the focus on both the rhetorical framework and grammatical patterns germane to these tasks and the purpose of the research project.
- 2) To provide training in regularly occurring rhetorical tasks and patterns associated with writing up research. This course includes but is not limited to: producing literature reviews and/or annotated bibliographies with the concentration on conventions of style and format of specific academic disciplines; synthesizing and relating verbal and non-verbal materials; analyzing research data and drawing conclusions.
- 3) To provide training for the development of self-editing and proofreading skills.
- 4) To provide individualized assistance with the drafting phase of documents.

## **Attendance and Course Work**

Since we are meeting once a week, attendance at all classes is essential and expected. In order to fulfill your goals for this class and pass the course, it is important that you do all the homework and writing assignments on time. Reading of assigned materials as per dates indicated on the course syllabus is expected. If you cannot attend a class, you are still responsible for the work, materials, content, and assignments. In-class writing assignments may not be made up. If you have two class absences or miss four class-hours, your course grade will be lowered one half mark, e.g. from A- to B+. If you have three class absences or miss 6 class-hours, you may not pass the course (even if you submit all the assignments in a good shape). In other words, you may miss only one class (or two class-hours) without a direct penalty. This absence is for sickness or obligations for which you must miss class (for example, presenting at a conference or traveling to another city to renew a visa). If you have a health problem, an emergency, or special circumstances that cause you to miss more than one class, please discuss your situation with your instructor.

Your course grade is based on both class participation and written assignments. To get credit (CR) for this course, you must receive a grade of B- or higher. Failure to achieve a B- means a grade of NC (No Credit).

## **Writing Conference Attendance, Schedule, and Format**

Biweekly individual writing conferences are held outside of class. Writing conference time slots (30 min.) will be announced in advance and schedules will be arranged in class. Writing conferences provide a valuable opportunity for you to receive individual attention and discuss drafts of your writing projects for the course and any reading/writing/language questions or problems you wish to discuss. One writing conference will be held as a small group discussion organized around your questions, comments, and concerns common to the group. Attendance at conferences is mandatory, and students are expected to be fully prepared and to participate actively. Missed

conferences will not be made up unless under exceptional circumstances. Please email your instructor 24 hours ahead of time if you can't make it to a conference in order to reschedule.

Writing conferences will be scheduled for Weeks 1, 3, 5, 7/8, 9/10.

## **Papers**

In addition to homework and in-class writing exercises, you will compose two major assignments for this course: a short paper and an individual writing project (IWP) will be chosen to meet your academic needs and expectations for this course. As you are working on your assignments, make sure that you date and keep each piece of writing connected with them. This means that you will submit all the writing you have done on a specific paper, including any full drafts, worksheets, outlines, and even any brainstorming notes you may have done. It is important that you submit all of this work each time you submit a paper.

Since learning to revise and proofread your own writing is a large part of this course, you will do three drafts for each paper. First drafts for the assignments will be discussed during the writing conferences. To receive constructive feedback, it is important that you turn in as strong a draft as possible. Second drafts will be critiqued by peers. There will be no extra revisions after the grade is assigned.

Major assignments (Short Paper and IWP) must be submitted in hard copy form (not electronically) except under extenuating circumstances.

## **Due Dates**

Submit your assignments on their due dates during the class sessions or in my mailbox. Failure to turn in homework assignments and drafts of the major assignments on the days they are due may result in the lowering of the grade for your work one half mark for each day late (i.e., A to A- if it is one day late; B+ to B- if it is two days late). Extensions will be granted only in extreme cases. If you cannot turn in your regular homework assignment in class, you may submit it electronically as an attachment before the midnight of the day the assignment is due. In this case your assignment will get minimum response and no marginal comments will be provided. I need to have a hard copy of your assignments to give the best feedback.

Drafts to be discussed at the individual writing conferences should be turned in as follows:

- for Tuesday conferences – on Monday (in class or by 7:00 PM in my mailbox) or earlier;
- for Thursday conferences – on Tuesday (by 7:00 PM in my mailbox) or earlier.

## **Paper Format**

Turn in all drafts and pre-writing used in the process of working on each assignment in a

FOLDER with your name on the front. Rough and final drafts of all assignments must be typed, double-spaced, using 12-point font (Times New Roman, Baskerville, Courier, Helvetica fonts). Margins should be set at one inch all around. Use white bond, unlined 8.5 x 11" paper. Your papers should be neatly stapled together with your name, instructor's name, the course, date, and the draft number written in the top left corner for rough drafts and on the cover sheet for final drafts. The pages should also be numbered. All rough and final drafts should be printed in dark ink or laser printed. Run your paper through a SPELL CHECKER before printing. Your papers should be composed and polished to the best of your abilities. *Papers submitted without meeting these guidelines will be deemed "unacceptable" and will be considered "late" until the submission guidelines are met.*

### **Grading**

Individual Writing Project	50%
Short paper	20%
Written homework and in-class writings	15%
Class & Individual Writing Conferences Grade (preparation, participation, effort, & progress)	15%

### **Writing Assignments**

For this class, you must be prepared to write either a thesis/dissertation proposal or a specific chapter for a thesis/dissertation (or be in the process of writing them). As such, writing assignments consist of revision of the work already in progress on the thesis/dissertation or proposal, or drafting of a new chapter of the thesis/ dissertation or a portion of the proposal with the focus on specific tasks and conventions discussed in class.

For the Individual Writing Project (IWP), you are recommended to choose one of the following:

1. A focused literature review
2. Introduction sections (or a full Introductory chapter) of thesis/dissertation\*
3. A portion of thesis/dissertation proposal (or prospectus)
4. Introduction sections (or the first half) of primary research report for publication

\* If you need to work on a chapter other than Introduction, a consultation with instructor is required.

Depending on your IWP, you may choose one of the following short papers:

1. Annotated bibliography
2. Critical review, i.e., an analysis of evidence in support of a specific thesis
3. Style manual for thesis/dissertation writing (may be with a focus on a specific chapter)
4. Style manual for thesis/dissertation proposal writing (may be with a focus on specific sections)
5. Style manual for research report publication

Additional instructions and guidelines for both assignments will be provided.

### **Plagiarism Policy**

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work or ideas without acknowledging them as the source. This applies to all writing assignments in this course and your other courses at the university. The work unfairly used could be in written form (print or electronic, published or unpublished) or in spoken form (public or private). As with any other form of cheating, plagiarism is seen as a serious violation of academic ethics; therefore, any student who has plagiarized is liable to be penalized severely. The penalties are usually a failing course grade, suspension for a quarter, or expulsion from the university.

**You are required to acknowledge your sources of information whenever your work has relied on the words or thoughts of others.**

It is particularly important that you learn to recognize the forms which plagiarism may take in student writing. This course is designed to help you practice the many ways you can successfully use the ideas of others and appropriately document the sources. Your instructor will answer any questions you may have about when and how to use any other writer's work, and the course will provide extensive instruction on acceptable citation and documentation practices.

Please note that OPIE 575 seeks to help you gain greater independence as an academic writer; thus, all writing and editing of your papers (beyond the assistance provided by your instructor and your adviser) must be your own work. Acceptable collaboration with others includes discussion of course readings, comparing ideas on how to approach the assignments, peer critique of classmates' papers, and assigned collaborative writing activities.

## **Suggested Syllabus**

### ***Week 1: March 27***

Introduction to course, data sheet, course survey, the issues of plagiarism, individual writing projects, short paper assignment discussion, and conferences scheduling

### ***Week 2: April 3***

Positioning of the research writer: S&F Unit 1  
Introduction to experimental research report, establishing the context of your research, problem statements: W&B Chs 1-2  
Moves in research paper introductions: AWG pp. 242-250

### ***Week 3: April 10***

Introduction to Literature Review, Annotated Bibliography: S&F Unit 4  
Discussion of sample reviews of literature.  
Paraphrase, evaluation, citations: S&F Unit 4; W&B Ch 3-4  
Summaries and comparative summaries (critiques).  
Short Paper Peer Critiques

### ***Week 4: April 17***

Cont. with literature reviews, metadiscourse of the research world: S&F Ch 5  
The use of tense in reviewing literature, indicating a gap: AWG pp. 251-261  
Quoting and elaboration on quotations. Documentation of sources.  
***Short Paper is due April 17 in class***

### ***Week 5: April 24***

Abstract writing conventions. Thesis/Dissertation Acknowledgments. Methods and materials: S&F Unit 6.1-3; W&B Chs 5-6 and Ch 9; AWG pp 224-231

### ***Week 6: May 1***

Writing up results and discussion different formats: S&F Unit 6.4-5; AWG pp. 268-276  
Language focus as needed

### ***Week 7: May 8***

Writing conference abstracts S&F Unit 2  
Discussion of sample conference abstracts  
IWP Peer Critiques

### ***Week 8: May 15***

Writing of various kinds of academic correspondence: S&F Unit 7  
IWP Peer Critiques

### ***Week 9: May 22***

Cont. with writing of various kinds of academic correspondence: S&F Unit 8  
Review, self-evaluation letter (in-class writing), course evaluations

**Week 10: May 29**

No class (OU closed): Memorial Day

The last writing conference: small-group presentations

***IWP is due June 1 (Thursday) by 7:00PM in one of my mailboxes***

**Individual Writing Conferences**

1) Date/Time:

Introduction of an individual writing project (IWP) topic, plans, goals, and expectations.  
Short paper choice.

2) Date/Time:

Short Paper draft discussion

3) Date/Time:

IWP draft discussion

4) Date/Time:

IWP draft discussion

5) Date/Time:

Small group presentation topic

Note: One of the conferences will be a small group writing conference. It is a responsibility of the group to suggest the date and agenda, and decide on the individual tasks for participants to contribute to the discussion at the conference.