

Elementary English Composition Syllabus, Winter 2006

Instructor: Gord Sellar

Course Overview:

Writing is fast becoming a major concern for Korean students of English, and of course it is, in our internet-revolutionized world, an extremely important skill. However, most University students are uncertain about their writing, and need help with very important basics in the writing process.

This course is designed to provide students with solutions for these basic questions of how to successfully set out in developing their writing in English. (Although the skills they learn will also be somewhat applicable in your Korean writing, as well.) This course assumes that students have a basic ability in spoken English, but that they have not spent much time working on developing their English writing skills.

While the content of the course will be tailored to the needs of the particular group of students, the main intended focus will be on basic skills such as prewriting strategies, planning and outlining; topic sentence writing; rewriting, revision, editing; proofreading and formatting. Instead of focusing on longer forms, we will focus on shorter forms, tight structure, and other crucial basics, so that students will be well-equipped to proceed to longer and more complex forms later on in their studies, whether in the classroom or independently.

By the end of this course, students will therefore be expected to be able to write thoughtful, interesting, and organized paragraphs and short essays.

To this end, class sessions will consist of lectures, composition practice, group editing and discussion exercises, and so on; homework activities will include a group blog, preparation of writing assignments, and occasional readings or editing assignments.

Homework

Homework for this class falls under several different categories.

Regular writing assignments of different kinds will be assigned throughout the semester; for shorter homework assignments, such as writing a topic sentence or a brief outline, homework may be due for the next class meeting; for slightly longer assignments, I will usually give students a week or ten days to prepare their assignments. I probably won't assign anything requiring more time than this; however, it is very important that, if you feel you need more time, you communicate directly with me about this.

All assignments submitted to me must be typed (double-spaced) and include your name, student number, my name, and the course name and number. Submissions consisting of multiple pages should be stapled or paperclipped, but I prefer that students not use plastic folders or binders to submit their work. Any work failing to meet these criteria will be returned to the student immediately for resubmission within 3 days.

Throughout the semester, you will be expected to participate in a *group blog* that I will set up in the next week or two. You will be expected to post paragraphs a minimum of two to three times a week, as well as to post comments, editing suggestions, and responses to others' paragraphs, and so forth. The group blog will allow you not only to practice writing on subjects which interest you, but also to learn from others' feedback, and from the errors and merits you encounter in your peers' writing.

You may post as often as you like, of course, and grading for the blog will be ranked from top to bottom, so that the most active posters and commenters will receive the highest grades for their blog participation mark.

Your final portfolio, due near the end of semester, must be submitted to me with a large envelope that is addressed to yourself, and which has proper postage for the portfolio to be sent to you once it has been marked. Portfolios will not be accepted without a return envelope with sufficient postage.

Textbook

I will announce the textbook which we will use after I receive a preliminary writing sample from class members. The textbook may be supplemented by handouts, readings, and other materials.

Should you wish to explore texts or materials not encompassed in this course, please feel free to ask me for recommendations. I will be more than happy to help you find materials which are suited to your needs and worth exploring.

Assessment

As you can see below, course assessment is not heavily focused on examinations. The majority of your grade (70%) will have nothing to do with the examinations in this course! This is because for your development as a writer, what is important is constant work and practice at writing in English. Regular attendance, in-class participation, completion of homework, and regular contribution to our class's group blog are all very important to your grade.

10% - Attendance

20% - In-class participation

20% - Assignments & Homework

20% - Participation in Group Blog

15% - Midterm Exam

15% - Final Writing Project/Portfolio

A score of 0% in any of the above marks will result in an incomplete grade. Students must at least attempt all homework/writing assignments, especially the midterm exam and final project and portfolio, in order to pass the course.

Contact Information

Email: mistergord@gmail.com

Office N223

Office Hours: TBA (To Be Announced)

Office Phone: 02-2164-4459

COURSE OUTLINE: Subject to change, simplification, etc.

Week 1: INTRODUCTION AND BEARINGS: We'll discuss the syllabus, ground rules, expectations, get better acquainted, and check attendance. You will also prepare me writing sample, in class.

Week 2: STARTING OUT: I will announce the course textbook, and we will set some goals. This is where we start planning what we're going to do, and you start making decisions about what you want to get out of this class. We'll also take a look at a couple of readings and discuss them, pulling them apart to get a good sense of their structure, and so on.

Week 3: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?: Pre-writing strategies, from brainstorming and idea webbing to free-writing. Also, the classblog should be online, so I'll give you a quick lesson in how to sign up and how to use it, and you can sign up and start blogging for credit.

Week 4: TAKING AIM: We'll discuss working out topics, controlling ideas, and crafting topic sentences: I want you to know how to start a project you can actually finish. We may also discuss outlining and other planning strategies, construct outlines out of readings, and we'll establish your WRITING CHECKLIST. I also plan on getting some feedback from you at this time.

Week 5: THE ANATOMY OF A PARAGRAPH: We'll cover formatting, layout, structure, and other basics in writing a single paragraph, or, if you're an exceptional group, we'll extend that to how to make a series of paragraphs work and flow together. And of course, after looking at some examples, you're going to work on paragraphs of your own, and then discuss them together in groups.

Week 6: COPY ME #1: Here I'm going to provide you with an example format/structure, and you're going to have one week to complete your own original piece of writing using this structure. It might be a newspaper horoscope, it might be a wedding announcement, it might even be a short movie review.

Week 7: CATCH THIS: This week, we'll work on common EFL writing mistakes, and how to catch yourself doing them, as well as how to prepare editorial feedback. You will also review your Writing Checklist

Week 8: MIDTERM EXAM: More on this as the exam approaches.

Week 9: PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS: We will schedule individual meetings between me and each student, one-on-one, to discuss your progress, and to address any concerns that are specific to your writing. You can, of course, bring a friend, but the focus of our meeting will be your work, and how *you* are doing.

Week 10: THE SECRET: The secret of good writing is... well, there are a few, but one of the big ones is this: rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. We're going to discuss rewriting, editing, and proofreading your own work.

Week 11: COPY ME #2: We're going to take a look at another pre-set format/structure, and you're going to work in groups to prepare a document compiling your writing into a single document. You'll have a couple of weeks to prepare it and submit it.

Week 12: THE BIG ONE: In Week 12, I will let you know about your big final project, and show you some examples of the kind of project I expect you to complete. We'll also review editing and feedback.

Week 13: COPY ME #3: We're going to take a look at one more prepared format/structure, and you're going to prepare me a document in this format. This will probably be collaborative, like Copy Me #2, but it will also require some planning and cooperation. It's going to involve some planning and cooperation, though, I suppose, if you are a workaholic, you could prepare me something on your own. I don't advise it, though!

Week 14: MORE FEEDBACK: You should have some of your final project underway. This week we'll share work, get feedback, and talk about editing and rewriting in terms of these projects.

Week 15: MORE CONSULTATIONS: I'm going to meet with you and go over your projects, discuss your blog entries and portfolio, and so on.

Week 16: THE BIG FINISH: We'll get into something else, either something that will build on what you've learned, or some other, creative structure. Your final portfolios will be due, and other than that, we'll probably have a fun last meeting, if that's possible for a writing class.