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21W.219/ 21W.220 (Graduate/Undergraduate)
Foundations of Academic and Professional Writing (ELS)

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Fall 2023	**Irene Maksymjuk**
M W 7 – 8:30 pm	imaksym@mit.edu
Classroom 14N-225	Office: 14N-230
Office hours TBA and by appointment	617-407-3253

Canvas course site: https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/22242

Course description:
This course is designed to improve your grammatical control, and teach you the strategies and forms needed to write clearly and concisely in your MIT career and beyond. We will focus on mastering varied sentence structures, clarity, and paragraph organization, and also work on audience awareness, improving vocabulary choices, and punctuation, as well as other mechanics of North American academic writing. Expect regular writing practice in and outside of class, focused on learning to express information and ideas clearly, particularly when defining terms, presenting problems and solutions, explaining processes, and commenting on data. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you will learn to revise and edit your own work through incorporating feedback from peers and the instructor.

Prioritizing for enrollment
First priority is for MIT students for whom the class is an Institute recommendation or requirement based on the English Evaluation Test (EET). Next are students required or recommended to take the class based on the EET within the past two years. Finally, if room remains, credit-seeking students for whom the class is not required or recommended by the Institute, with permission of the instructor. No listeners.

Required materials:
- Course Reader for 21W.219/220, available at Copy Tech (Bldg. 11 basement). Please bring the Course Reader (CR) to every class.
- A writing folder/portfolio in which to keep all your writing assignments, including successive drafts. You will be reviewing your first drafts in hard copy with peers, so be sure to bring those to class when due.
- A folder or notebook for handouts and the additional materials distributed in class. These will also be posted on Canvas but you will often need hard-copies in class.
- An online English (NOT bilingual) dictionary and grammar reference. See Canvas for examples.

Attendance, Preparation, and other Policies
- Most of this course grade is based on work done and/or presented during class time. Therefore, attendance, punctuality, and participation are essential. Preparation (or lack thereof) affects performance, so is noted and factored into your grade. Thus, plan to attend every class and participate actively. If you think that you may be required to

attend lectures or do work for other classes during our class time, please consider changing to another section or postponing this class until you have more time.

- More than three unexcused absences (e.g., you have a conference or job interview during class time, get busy in lab, or you oversleep…) will negatively affect your course grade, as will a pattern of lateness.

- If you are ill, please let me know; that is an excused absence. If you know in advance that you absolutely must miss class, please email me as early as possible, so I will not worry about you or plan to include you in team work. Instances where students miss more than one week of class for any reason will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis to ensure students stay on track toward learning outcomes.

Covid precautions: When covid rates increase, we are encouraged to mask in-doors to keep us all safer, especially our more vulnerable friends and relatives. (However, this is an individual decision, which will have no bearing on grades. Grading is based solely on the criteria listed further below.)

Homework
Assignments will be given in class, and details posted on Canvas. Be sure to **regularly** consult Canvas (Modules) for what is due by the next class. Assignments should be submitted on Canvas unless otherwise specified. Missing class is not an excuse for missing an assignment. Students who must miss class are expected to nonetheless complete the assignments and be prepared for the next class. Similarly, you must still submit your homework, unless you are ill. If ill, see below:

Late papers will not be accepted unless you have gotten *prior* approval from the instructor. This includes drafts of papers. Permission to turn in papers late will be given for emergencies. If you do not have time to submit your work on time because of other classes, please wait until you have more time to take this course.

Participation
Attendance and participation **make up 10% of your grade**. Students are expected to participate to the best of their abilities. This includes demonstrating preparedness, contributing comments in full class discussions, asking questions, being active in small group discussions, and thoughtfully evaluating other students' papers in peer review and offering constructive feedback. If needed, students may be required to come to the instructor's office hours or visit the writing center for additional tutoring.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism
At MIT, per North American academic conduct rules, you are expected to do your own work. While borrowing ideas and words from others is acceptable in some cultures, it is not in North America, and the penalty for plagiarizing is severe. Moreover, work you have not written

yourself, including that generated by AI, is readily identifiable, and **defeats the purpose of taking a writing course**. Writing is thinking and while chat bots may be helpful, they do not think, for you or anyone else. To be briefly discussed in class.

Plagiarized papers will not receive credit, **and the participation grade will also be negatively affected**. Students who plagiarize a second time are likely to fail the class. To be safe:

*Do not copy/paste from the web, someone else's paper or another source, including an AI (including a translator, or a large language model like ChatGPT)
*Do not submit papers you have already submitted for other classes.
*Do not give your papers to native speakers to edit.
*Keep a good record of any sources you use to write a paper and reference them properly.

We will focus more on how to avoid plagiarism as we move along, and help is available at the WCC (see below), but for now please be advised that any writing you submit must be completely your own, and any source material you use must be clearly identified.

The MIT Writing and Communication Center (WCC)
The Writing and Communication Center offers **free** weekly one-on-one professional advice from communication experts with advanced degrees and publishing experience. The WCC can help you further develop your oral communication skills and to learn about all types of academic and professional writing. You can learn more about the WCC consultations at http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center and register with the online scheduler to make appointments through https://mit.mywconline.com. Please note that the WCC hours are offered on Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., and fill up fast; if you can not find an open slot, be sure to sign up for the Wait List (to be automatically notified by email when there's a cancellation).

ASSIGNMENTS
Work in this course includes short homework assignments, including grammar and vocabulary practice, editing, and other writing, as well as quizzes on vocabulary or grammar and mechanics; **as well as five 1-1.5 page major writing assignments, with 3 drafts of each:**
- **Personal Narrative:** What is your story? Or a story about something you have experienced that conveys a sense of who you are and what you value?
- **Extended Definition:** How can you accurately define a key term in your field, and then develop this definition to explain the term more fully to a non-expert reader? (Includes paraphrasing and review of summarizing without plagiarizing, i.e., without using the original wording of the source text)
- **Process Description:** How can you explain the steps in a process so that your non-expert reader understands them clearly?
- **Data Commentary:** How can you explain graphs and charts so that your reader understands both the information and its implications?
- **Problem Solution Paper:** What is a current problem or issue in your field, and what would you propose (research or application) to solve it?

Revisions: Learning to revise your work carefully and objectively is where writing improvement actually occurs, so is a major feature of this course. Thus, you will revise each paper (at least) twice: first according to your classmate's feedback and then in response to mine. Your final paper grade will depend on the quality of the final draft, as well as the incorporation of others' suggestions.

Format and following instructions: See *Guidelines for Typed Assignments* on Canvas and at the beginning of the Course Reader. Papers not meeting these criteria will be marked down. Similarly, read the instructions for each assignment carefully and ask for clarification if you're not clear on what you should do. Turning in a paper that does not match the assignment given, including length, will result in a lower grade.

 Courtesy: The only acceptable use of cell phones during class is to look up something directly relevant to class discussion. If you must take an emergency call, please step out of the room.

GRADES are based on the following:

Attendance, punctuality, and participation	10%
Preparation of homework assignments, including revisions and vocabulary lessons	15%
Quizzes on vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics	5%
Personal Narrative	10%
Extended Definition for a general audience (including memo of changes)	15%
Process Description	15%
Data Commentary	15%
Problem/Solution Paper	15%
	100.00%

Grading scale (major papers and course)

97 -100=A+	94 – 96 =A	90-93=A-	87-89=B+	83-86=B	80-82=B-
77-79=C+	73-76=C	70-72=C-	60-69=D	Below 60 = F	

Homework and other short assignments will be graded as follows:

> **√+** (100%), **√** (85%), **√ -** (70%), **or 0** (doesn't match assignment, late without permission, or not turned in)**.**

A tentative schedule of classes and assignments follows below.

Tentative Schedule (subject to change, so be sure always to check Canvas)
Homework and assignment details and updates will be posted on Canvas, which you should check daily since we make adjustments as needed. Homework should be completed BEFORE and submitted in or before class, unless otherwise specified.

| | | | | G: = Grammar | R: = Read | Cvs = Canvas |

W	#	D	Date	Topics	Homework Due (that day!)
1	1	W	Sept 6	• Introductions to each other and the course • Discussion: Writing at MIT and beyond • Writing Sample **(Narrative)**	• Student Information form; • **Narrative 1ˢᵗ draft** (both due on Canvas by next day)
2	2	M	Sept 11	• Review: Parts of speech • What is good academic/professional writing ? • Telling a story: describing people, places, events • Personal story conversation • Intro to peer review)	• "Writing in Your Field" exercise • Read Greene, "Why Write Science in Plain English?" (both in *Good Academic Writing 1* assignment**)** • Sample student narratives #1 & 2, answer questions
	3	W	Sept 13	• Writing process I: free-writing (favorite person or place) • Sentence parts • Choppiness 1: coordination • Emails/politeness • **Narrative Peer Review discussion**	• G: parts of speech, sentence units • R: Greene, "Tell a Story" • R: Guidelines for Typed Assignments • **Narrative Peer Review** (read partner's first draft and answer Qs)
3	4	M	Sept 18	Style & Cohesion: • Good paragraphs • Choppiness 2: subordination • Cohesion 1—transitions • Vocabulary journal/teach-in assignment	• G: Verb tense review • Email assignment
	5	W	Sept 20	• Vocabulary teach-in 1 • Plagiarism & Paraphrasing I • Adjective clause review • Intro to defining terms and extending the definition	• G: Adjective clauses and defining exercise. • Vocabulary List #1 • **Narrative 2ⁿᵈ draft to instructor**

4	6	M	Sept 25	• Definition example & practice • Singulars and plurals in general statements • Assign Extended Definition	• G: Punctuating Quotations • Paraphrasing Practice
	7	W	Sept 27	• Academic style • Topic sentences • The writing process: mapping ideas and detailed outlines	• Extended Definition proposal • **Narrative Final Draft due** • Vocabulary List #2
5	8	M	Oct 2	• **Extended Definition Peer Review and discussion**	• **Extended Definition First Draft**: to be peer reviewed in class. • **Peer Review**: Submit on Cvs by end of day
	9	W	Oct 4	• Vocabulary teach-in 2 • More on summarizing and outlining • Cohesion 2: key nouns, this + sum	• **Extended Def 2nd draft to instructor**
	M + T		Oct 9 - 10	**Indigenous Peoples+ holiday**	**NO CLASSES**
6	10	W	Oct 11	• **Quiz #1** • Can/could/will/would confusion • More on academic voice • Sample Extended Definition	• Vocabulary #3
7	11	M	Oct 16	• Vocabulary teach-in 3 • Describing a process • Student process description #1, answer Q's • Assign Process Paper	• Read sample student process descriptions #2 and #3, answer Q's
	12	W	Oct 18	• **Quiz #2** • Cause/Effect structures; other grammar review as needed • Punctuation workshop	• **Extended Definition Final Draft due**
8	13	M	Oct 23	• Process flow & cohesion • **Process Paper Peer Review discussion**	• **Process Paper Peer Review** (read partner's first draft and answer Qs) • *Mid-term survey*

				• Verbs-- Active vs. passive voice; transitive/ intransitive	
	14	W	Oct 25	• Plagiarism and Paraphrasing 2 • Academic Style 2 • Begin Data Commentary (DC): purpose, sample; structure; • Highlighting line graphs	• Sentence combination (in CR) • **Process Paper 2nd draft to instructor**
9	15	M	Oct 30	• Articles I • Participial adjectives/linking • DC: Highlighting bar graphs • DC: Making defensible claims • Assign Data Commentary	• Sample student PDCS #2 • Practice: Interpreting Data (CR) • Bring two separate data sets to class that highlight different problems and for which you might propose solutions.
	16	W	Nov 1	• Articles II • Mid-position adverbs • **Peer review DC proposals**	• **Data Commentary topic proposal** • Vocabulary #4 • **Process Paper Final Draft due**
10	17	M	Nov 6	• Parallelism • Vocabulary teach-in 4	• Vocabulary review/prep
	18	W	Nov 8	• **Quiz #3** • **DC Peer Review discussion** • Conciseness and clarity	• **Data Commentary Peer Review** (read partner's first draft and answer Qs)
11	19	M	Nov 13	• Subject/verb agreement • Assign Problem/Solution (final paper)	• Read Problem/Solution Papers #1 and #2 and answer Qs • **Data Comment. 2nd draft to instructor**
	20	W	Nov 15	• Problem/Solutions grammar • Problem/Solution proposals discussion	• **Problem/Solution proposal**
12	21	M	Nov 20	• **Problem/Solution Peer Review discussion**	• **Problem/Solution Peer Review** (read partner's first draft and answer Qs
	Wed – Fri			**Thanksgiving Day Holiday**	**NO CLASSES**
13	22	M	Nov 27	• Proof-reading techniques and practice 1 • Grammar review as needed	**Data Commentary Final draft due**
	23	W	Nov 29	• Final questions/concerns	**Problem/Solution 2nd draft to instructor**
14	24	M	Dec 4	• Proof-reading techniques and editing practice 2	

	25	W	Dec 6	• Final Quiz (#4) • Editing practice	
14	26	M	Dec 11	• TBA: Review and practice as needed	
	27	W	Dec 13	• Wrap up and course evaluation • How to continue improving your writing	• **Problem/Solution Final Draft due**