

**University Writing**  
 WRIT 1301, section 42—Fall 2012  
 University of Minnesota, Twin Cities  
 4 credits

**Instructor:** Andrew Marzoni

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**Classroom:** Lind 320

**Time:** TTh 8:15-9:30 AM

**Office:** Lind 26

**Office hours:** TTh 10:00-11:00 AM, or by appointment

### Course Description

A man walks into a university classroom carrying a stack of freshly printed papers. It is morning. The classroom is full of students, each exhibiting a different emotion somewhere on the spectrum between nervous anxiety and mind-dulling ennui. The man—a teacher, apparently—begins talking and distributes the papers. The students rouse, albeit slightly. Something funny happens.

The above paragraph may not strike you as a joke, but it could be. “Joke” means many different things to many different people: for Sigmund Freud, jokes are conscious expressions of thoughts usually suppressed by human society; for the Transportation Security Administration—post-9/11—they are in all cases forbidden. What most all of us can agree on, though, is that behind every joke is the intention to be funny. Even the joke above, which you probably won’t find funny unless you are a fan of Steven Wrightesque/postmodern/anti-comedic/meta/funny-because-it’s-not-funny humor, harbors this inclination. But what makes something funny? Is it the content? The delivery? Something else? What is humor? Why are we inclined to consider some things funny, and others not? Why do some people consider some jokes to be funny, while others do not? Why, as humans, do we enjoy laughter? What *is* laughter?

In this course—which, at its base, has no content (see description from the Department of Writing Studies below)—we will be considering these questions in order to more broadly interrogate the fundamentals of written communication: proper use of the English language, the basics of argumentation, critical thinking and reading, and the academic essay. Good writers and successful comedians have a number of things in common. Foremost among them is their ability to relate their intentions to an audience such that the desired effects are brought about: in the case of the comedian, laughter; in the case of the writer, understanding and assent. By investigating the ways that language does or does not make us laugh, it is my hope that we will simultaneously draw conclusions regarding the best ways to communicate what we want to say, in college and beyond. Regardless of major discipline or career aspirations, all of us have (at least) one thing in common: in order to have a good life (or “succeed” or “achieve” or “excel” or any of the other buzzwords university press releases misguidedly pat themselves on the back for ingraining in students’ skulls), we need to communicate clearly—even in this age of electronic media we haven’t stopped using language. Of course, you don’t have to be funny. Though, it obviously doesn’t hurt.

## **WRIT 1301 Overview**

I quote the following from the Department of Writing Studies:

“Through frequent practice and study of writing, WRIT 1301 introduces students to typical university writing practices, including an emphasis on developing well-researched, properly cited papers. WRIT 1301 fulfills the first-year writing requirement.

Activities include but are not limited to: introduction to academic genres of reading and writing; critical reading and analysis of writing for rhetorical principles of audience, purpose, and argumentative strategies; emphasis on performing research with electronic and print library; and sequenced readings and writing, with a researched paper as major assignment.

Members of the class will practice using writing to develop, refine, and communicate ideas in academic contexts. Students should expect to write formally and informally, produce drafts, read and respond to each other’s drafts, and revise, edit, and proofread. In addition students will share their writing with others in the class, receive responses from others, and read and respond carefully to the work of others.

All of this means that the class is structured around writing activities, discussion of reading and writing, and group work of various kinds. Students need to be active participants in this course, and help insure the success of the course for all by making positive contributions to activities, assignments, and discussion.”

## **Course objectives**

Again, from the Department of Writing Studies:

“At the successful conclusion of WRIT 1301, students will learn to:

### *Develop a process of writing*

- control prewriting and planning strategies to arrive at a focused topic
- produce an outline or prospectus for a researched paper
- craft thesis statements that indicate a clear position on a topic and tie the paper together
- develop a topic through clearly structured paragraphs and the whole paper so that ideas are fully explained, assertions are backed up, supporting evidence is sufficient and claims are credible
- through the sequence of assignments, develop a body of knowledge and growing perspective on a topic

### *Explore diverse contexts and styles of reading and writing*

- communicate their ideas and those of others to specific audiences
- write in appropriate academic genres and computer media to communicate with different audiences
- make choices in their own writing and articulate other options

### *Practice disciplines of research and study*

- identify an author’s audience, purpose, argument, and assumptions (i.e., critical reading) in an analysis paper or class discussion

- locate and evaluate relevant scholarly and popular sources on a research topic using library resources
- properly and ethically use MLA or APA documentation format for in-text and external bibliographic citations of scholarly, popular, and electronic sources
- consistently follow standards of written, edited English”

### **Texts**

The following texts are required for the course:

Course packet (available for purchase at Paradigm Course Resource, 720 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN)

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: Norton, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-393-93361-1 (available for purchase at the University of Minnesota Bookstore, Coffman Union)

Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4576-0239-9 (available for purchase at the University of Minnesota Bookstore, Coffman Union)

All additional readings will be posted as PDFs or web links on the course Moodle site. Students should expect to spend some money photocopying or printing drafts and additional readings.

### **Workload**

Students can expect to spend an average of eight hours per week on this course outside of class time. Expect at least 50 pages of reading most weeks, but keep in mind that the reading load will fluctuate from week to week.

### **Course Schedule**

(Course schedule is subject to change. NB: All readings should be completed *before* the class for which they are assigned)

## **Unit 1: Fundamentals of Reading & Writing**

*Week 1*

**Tuesday, September 4**

Introductions, discuss syllabus

**Thursday, September 6**

Clarity & Grammar: Read Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers, *A Pocket Style Manual*, pp. 2-53

*Week 2*

**Tuesday, September 11**

Punctuation & Mechanics: Read Hacker & Sommers, pp. 55-86  
Hand out guidelines for Assignment #1, discuss

**Thursday, September 13**

MLA Style: Read Hacker & Sommers, pp. 105-62

*Week 3***Tuesday, September 18**

Academic Conversation: Read Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say*, "Introduction" (pp. 1-15)

Discuss Peer Review

**Assignment #1 Rough Draft due**

**Thursday, September 20**

Peer Review

*Week 4***Tuesday, September 25**

"They Say": Read Graff & Birkenstein, Part 1 (pp. 19-51)

**Thursday, September 27**

"I Say": Read Graff & Birkenstein, Part 2 (pp. 55-101)

**Assignment #1 Final Draft due**

*Week 5***Tuesday, October 2**

"Tying It All Together": Read Graff & Birkenstein, Part 3 (pp. 105-38)

Hand out guidelines for Assignment #2, discuss

### Unit 2: Theories of Humor

**Thursday, October 4**

Read Immanuel Kant, from *Critique of Judgment* (Course Packet)

Read Georges Bataille, "Laughter" (Course Packet)

*Week 6***Tuesday, October 9**

Read Henri Bergson, "Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic," pp. 2a-33a (Course Packet)

**Thursday, October 11**

Read Bergson, "Laughter," pp. 33a-55b (Course Packet)

*Week 7***Tuesday, October 16**

Read Bergson, "Laughter," pp. 55b-61b (Course Packet)

**Assignment #2 Rough Draft due**

**Thursday, October 18**

Peer Review

*Week 8***Tuesday, October 23**

Read Sigmund Freud, "Humour" (Course Packet)

**Assignment #2 Revised Draft due**

**Thursday, October 25**

Read Charles Baudelaire, “The Essence of Laughter” (Course Packet)

*Week 9***Tuesday, October 30**

Read Luigi Pirandello, “On Humor” (Course Packet)

**Thursday, November 1**

Read Friedrich Nietzsche, selections from *The Gay Science* (Course Packet)

**Unit 3: Libraries & Research***Week 10***Tuesday, November 6**

Library Research Workshop (**Bring your laptop to class!**)

**Assignment #2 Final Draft due**

**Thursday, November 8**

Research: Read Hacker & Sommers, pp. 88-103

Hand out guidelines for Assignment #3, discuss

Distribute sign-up sheet for student conferences

*Week 11*

**Student Conferences—no class**

**Research proposal due in conferences**

*Week 12***Tuesday, November 20**

Screening: *The Lenny Bruce Performance Film* (1967)

**Annotated bibliography due**

**Thursday, November 22**

Thanksgiving—no class

**Unit 4: Humor in Practice***Week 13***Tuesday, November 27**

Read Woody Allen selections (Course Packet)

Screen clips from Allen films

**Assignment #3 Rough Draft due**

**Thursday, November 29**

Peer Review

*Week 14***Tuesday, December 4**

Read Franz Kafka stories (Course Packet)

Read David Foster Wallace, “Laughing with Kafka” (Course Packet)

Discuss Assignment #4

**Thursday, December 6**

Read Christopher Hitchens, “Why Women Aren’t Funny” (Course Packet)

Read Alessandra Stanley, “Who Says Women Aren’t Funny?” (Course Packet)

*Week 15*

**Tuesday, December 12**

Peer Review

**Assignment #4 Rough Draft due**

**Final Draft of Assignment #4 due to my office by 5 PM, Monday, December 17**

NB: There is no final exam for this course.

*Course Policies*

**Assignments and Grades**

Assignment #1 (3-5 pp.)	15%	
Assignment #2 (6-8 pp.)	20%	
Assignment #3 (8-10 pp.)	35%	(includes final draft: 20%, proposal: 5%, annotated bibliography: 5%, presentation: 5%)
Assignment #4 (4-6 pp.)	15%	
Class participation (includes in-class writing, Moodle posts, homework assignments, etc.)	15%	

NB: Guidelines for written assignments will be distributed over the course of the semester. Please see course calendar for due dates.

- You must turn in all required drafts and revisions. If you do not, you will receive an “F” for that assignment.
- Late assignments will lose one letter grade for every day (i.e. 24 hour period) they are turned in late.
- Keep copies of all your work in a folder dedicated exclusively to this course; back up your work on your computer in case assignments get lost.
- Students can expect assignments returned to them within one week’s time.

The grading policy in this course conforms to CLA guidelines. Therefore a “C” is equivalent to basic fulfillment of requirements; to achieve a grade higher than a “C” a student must perform beyond the basic requirements. Please keep the following scale and criteria in mind:

<b>Grading Scale</b>	A	100 to 93%	A-	92 to 90%
B+		89 to 87%	B	86 to 83%
B-		82 to 80%	C	76 to 73%
C+		79 to 77%	C-	72 to 70%
D		69 to 60%	F	59 to 0%

The University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance with the following:

- A 4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- A- 3.667
- B+ 3.333
- B 3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B- 2.667
- C+ 2.333
- C 2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- C- 1.667
- D+ 1.333
- D 1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements

For additional information, please refer to:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADINGTRANSCRIPTS.html>.

### **Extra Credit**

Does not exist in this class.

### **Moodle**

The course website can be accessed at <https://moodle2.umn.edu> (or, alternately, through the myU homepage, under the “my Courses” tab). I encourage all students to check this website frequently, as additional course readings, handouts, links, and other materials will be posted here. Additionally, *all students will be required to post one paragraph-length response to the course readings in the student discussion forum by 5:00 PM the day before each reading is to be discussed in class* (unless I say otherwise). Participation in online discussion will be factored into the participation grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

As discussion is an enormous part of this class, attendance at all class meetings and conferences is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will lower your grade for the course by half a letter (i.e. A- → B+).

Also, don't be late to class.

### **Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Mobile phones should always be off in class. If it rings, I'll answer it.

Occasionally, I will allow students to use laptops in class. If I decide to allow such a thing, I will notify you well in advance. If I haven't done such a thing, keep it off.

### *University Policies*

#### **Incompletes**

A grade of incomplete ("I") is given only in a genuine emergency, and generally only for work which is due during the last two weeks of the course. The student must make arrangements with the instructor for an incomplete before the last day of class.

#### **Student Conduct Code**

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:

[http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html).

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

#### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code:

[http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html)) If it

determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html>.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty:

<http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html>.

If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class-e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is

permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Plagiarism, representing someone else's intellectual work as your own, will result in a grade of F for the assignment, and may result in a grade of F for the course. Plagiarism can include submitting a paper:

- written by means of inappropriate collaboration;
- written by you for another course, submitted without the permission of both instructors;
- purchased, downloaded, or cut and pasted from the Internet;
- or that fails to properly acknowledge its sources through standard citations.

Remember: if you found it on Google, I can too!!!

### **Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes**

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/CLASSNOTESSTUDENTS.html>.

### **Sexual Harassment**

“Sexual harassment” means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html>.

### **Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action**

The University will provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

[http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity\\_Diversity\\_EO\\_AA.html](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.html).

### **Disability Accommodations**

The University is committed to providing quality education to all students regardless of ability. Determining appropriate disability accommodations is a collaborative process. You as a student must register with Disability Services and provide documentation of your disability. The course instructor must provide information regarding a course's content, methods, and essential components. The combination of this information will be used by Disability Services to determine appropriate accommodations for a particular student in a particular

course. For more information, please reference Disability Services:  
<http://ds.umn.edu/Students/index.html>.

### **Mental Health Services**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

### **Academic Freedom and Responsibility**

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.\* Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

*\* Language adapted from the American Association of University Professors "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students."*

### **Student Writing Support**

Students can get one-to-one-consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.