

## 4 English 0990: Preparatory English

English 0990: Preparatory English is a developmental non-credit course designed to enable students who are weak in English writing skills to improve their skills. The course begins with paragraph writing and builds to essay writing, with instruction in eliminating serious writing errors performed as needed. By the end of the course, the students should be able to write a “C” quality essay.

Instructors of English 0990 should remember that the students of this course arrive with different skill levels. The main goal of the course is to help the students reach the same level of skill by the end of the semester. These students, however, are often reluctant at the beginning of the semester to be in this course as it is a non-credit course. Part of the instructor’s work is to ease the students past their writing anxieties and help them improve.

Placement in English 0990 is determined in three (3) ways (see section 2.4 Placement in Chapter 2). On the second day of class, the instructor will have the students write an in-class diagnostic essay. The Director of Composition will give each 0990 instructor the essay topic at the beginning of the semester. The instructor should read these essays the same day and determine whether any of the essays are equivalent of a “C” essay or better (see 2.2.1 Criteria for Grading Papers). Such essays are to be brought to the attention of the Director of Composition. If the Director agrees with the instructor’s assessment, the student will be notified by the instructor that he/she will be placed in English 1010. The student is then to see the Department Chair for placement.

### 4.1 Guidelines & Objectives

It is recommended that English 0990 be taught as a writing workshop. This involves students writing regularly and frequently as part of the course and incorporating activities such as peer review of drafts, collaborative groups for developing early paragraphs and essays, and in-class drafts and revisions. The instructor may wish to act more as a facilitator of writing rather than as an instructor of writing in these cases.

The specific objectives of English 0990 are to help students:

- Recognize writing as serious and disciplined work that requires commitment.
- Eliminate basic grammatical and mechanical errors through the use of revision and proofreading.
- Write paragraphs and essays using different strategies of organization (rhetorical modes).
- Write the equivalent of an English 1010 “C” quality essay by the end of the course.

#### 4.1.1 The Paragraph

Instructors should begin the course with instruction in paragraph writing. It is recommended that the instructor start with personal writing, as it is easier for students to use personal examples for development. Students can move to more difficult topics as their abilities improve. Instructors are asked to instruct the rhetorical modes (narration, description, comparison-contrast, definition, process, cause and effect, etc.) as organizational strategies for paragraph organization and development.

Students should write paragraphs for practically every class before midterm. It is recommended that students be given plenty of in-class time for drafting and revision, and be encouraged to work in peer editing groups. Instructors can also ask students to prepare paragraphs outside of class. The instructor can assess as much work as she/he wishes, as long as her method is explained to the students and outlined in the syllabus. Paragraphs can be graded as Pass/Fail, as this is a Pass/Fail course. Instructors are encouraged to explain thoroughly why a paper has received a particular grade and give students some opportunities for revision. However, revision for better grades might be used sparingly towards the end of the course. By that time, students should be able to revise without instructor guidance.

#### 4.1.2 The Essay

In English 0990 the essay is usually taught after midterm. Students should write at least four (4) essays before the end of the course. Of course, instructors should instruct the students in all parts of the writing process (brainstorming and gathering information, drafting, revision, editing, and redrafting) while teaching the essay. Collaborative group work and peer editing should continue to be used.

For assessment of the essay, instructors should use “A” to “F” grades. While the final grade in English 0990 is indicated by Pass/Fail, giving students “A” to “F” grades on essays allows them to see how close they are getting to writing at the English 1010 level. Only essays that earn a grade of “C” or better are considered passing. Thus, essays which earn a “C” or better should be the goal of English 0990.

#### 4.2 Texts

The required texts for English 0990 follow:

Hacker, Diane. *The Bedford Handbook*. (current edition). New York: Bedford, 1998.  
Pamela Arlov. *Wordsmith: A Guide to Paragraphs and Short Essays*. New York; Prentice Hall, 1999.

Desk copies are available from the Director of Composition.

#### 4.3 General Syllabus

A copy of the General Syllabus for English 0990 follows. Please note that while it gives extensive information about the course, it is designed to be “general.” Instructors must create an additional syllabus that supplies more detailed information to the student to accompany the General Syllabus. Copies of the General Syllabus to disperse to classes can be obtained from the Department Secretary.

---

### English 0990: Preparatory English

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:** English 0990 is a non-credit course designed to prepare the student for college-level compositions. The course begins with a focus on paragraph writing, requiring that student demonstrate their ability to develop and organize paragraphs adequately and clearly. Later, the course concentrates on the short composition, requiring that students write four (4) or more essays or four (4) or more paragraphs each. The paragraphs and essays may be written in several rhetorical modes (narration, description, comparison-contrast, definition, process, cause and effect). Students may draw on

their own experiences as subjects for paragraphs and essays, and they may be asked to do some graded or non-graded writing each day.

The course also places particular emphasis on eliminating serious writing error (see Basic Errors below) through grammar and punctuation exercises and quizzes, with attention to helping students transfer grammar skills into their own writing. The course may be conducted as a workshop wherein students participate in such activities as peer review of drafts, collaborative group to develop early paragraphs and essays, and in-class drafts and revisions.

Initial placement in English 0990 is dependent on ACT and/or SAT scores. Final placement is determined by the English Department through an in-class essay written on the second meeting of class.

The English Department bases its approach to English 0990 on the following principles:

1. Preparatory English students must view writing as serious and disciplined work that requires commitment from the student.
2. Students should write frequent, even daily, compositions to acquire college-level written fluency.
3. Grammar and punctuation work should not be an end in itself, but should be taught within the context of students' writing to help ensure that those skills are transferred into their writing.
4. Good attendance and prompt completion of assignments are essential to progress in the course.

**BASIC ERRORS:** Certain errors in writing are called basic or failing errors. A pattern of such errors must be eliminated in English 0990. They include the following:

1. Lack of clarity at the sentence level
2. Subject-verb agreement errors
3. Comma splices and run-on or fused sentences
4. Sentence fragments
5. Incorrect verb forms
6. Spelling errors

**EVALUATION:** Midterm and final grades in this course are recorded as "P" (Pass) or "F" (Fail). In determining a student's final grade, instructors will count more heavily the work done in the second part of the course. For this reason, the instructor may choose to evaluate work by some designation other than letter grades before midterm, but may begin assigning letter grades of "A" through "F" after midterm. Throughout the semester, however, the course concentrates on three (3) broad concerns: 1) eliminating widespread Basic Errors, 2) eliminating a pattern of Basic Errors, and 3) strengthening composition skills. Therefore, no student should pass English 0990 for any one of the following reasons:

- If widespread Basic Errors persist in his/her writing;
- If composition skills remain weak, i.e., the student still cannot adequately develop or organize paragraphs and essays;
- If a pattern of one or two Basic Errors persists and composition skills remain weak.

A student may pass English 0990 if she/he has not eliminated the pattern of one or two Basic Errors, but that student will be automatically referred to the Writing Center the following semester.

**ATTENDANCE AND WRITING CENTER:** Each student enrolled in English 0990 is required to attend the Writing Center once each week for 50 minutes throughout the semester. The Writing Center staff is comprised of professionals and specially trained student tutors to help ensure each student's success in English 0990. To avoid receiving an "FE" in this course, a student should not be absent from class or from the Writing Center more than twice the number of times each meets per week (six times for MWF class, 4 times for TR or MW class, 2 times for the Writing Center).

**PLAGIARISM/CHEATING:** Passing off any other person's work as one's own constitutes plagiarism, a flagrant violation of intellectual honesty. Intellectual honesty is expected of all students.

**Any assignment that gives evidence of not being completely one's own work will receive the grade of "F."**

**REQUIRED TEXT:** *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 5th edition, Diana Hacker.  
Pamela Arlov. *Wordsmith: A Guide to Paragraphs and Short Essays*. New York;  
Prentice Hall, 1999.

---

#### 4.4 Sample Syllabus

As mentioned above, instructors must supply a supplemental syllabus to accompany the General Syllabus. An example is provided below. Note that the syllabus does not give more than a four weeks of assignments for the students. In this case, the instructor wishes for more leeway in her course outline so as to better address the skill needs of the class.

---

##### **English 0990.01: Preparatory English**

Fall 2000

204 Xavier South

9:00 – 9:50 MWF

(Syllabus issued: 17 August 2000)

Instructor: Dr. Jane Deaux

Office: 213A Administration Annex

Office Hours: 10:00 – 11:00 MWRF; 2:00 – 3:00 TR

Phone: 485-2233

Email: [jdeaux@xula.edu](mailto:jdeaux@xula.edu)

TEXTS: Diana Hacker. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 5th edition.

Pamela Arlov. *Wordsmith: A Guide to Paragraphs and Short Essays*. New York; Prentice Hall, 1999.

MATERIALS: (This may include any materials you think the students need for the course besides texts, such as notebooks, journals, diskettes, folders, etc.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES: (These are covered primarily in the General Syllabus. However, those objectives may be added to as in the following example.)

- To use a journal or notebook as a site for prewriting and essay formulation.
- To learn to write organized, well-developed paragraphs and sentences.
- To read, analyze, and discuss professional and student writing.
- To recognize and eliminate basic writing errors such as: lack of sentence clarity, subject verb agreement, sentence fragments, verb usage and punctuation.
- To write midterm and final exam essays that demonstrate proficiency in the course objectives.

ACTIVITIES: (You can list and explain the different types of writing and work performed in the course, such as paragraph writing, essay writing, quizzes, textbook exercises, group work, peer editing, individual conferences, class discussion, and Writing Center work. Guidelines and requirements for these should be explained.)

GRADING: (This section should clearly explain your grading system, including how you plan to convert letter grades to a Pass/Fail system. An example follows.)

This is a Pass/Fail course. I follow the departmental standards for this course, which means that work is assessed Pass/Fail until Midterms, and graded A to F (university standard) after Midterms. Each letter grade is given points for averaging grades: A (excellent) – 4 pts.; B (above average) – 3pts.; C (average) – 2pts.; D (below average) – 1 pt.; F (failure) – 0 pts.

Midterm grades are determined by an average of Pass/Fail grades accumulated by the Midterm. For example if over 50% of the grades by Midterm are P's, then the grade for Midterm is P. Final grades are determined by the average of the letter grades earned after Midterm. A C average is needed to earn a Pass for the Final Grade.

(If you plan to give different types of assignments different weights, it should also be explained in this section, as follows.)

Journal & exercises	25%
Quizzes	15%
Paragraphs/Essays	50%
Participation	10%

**DEADLINES:** (Many instructors like to give instructions concerning meeting deadlines and penalties for missing deadlines, such as dropping the assignment a letter grade for each day the assignment is late, or emphasizing that assignments are due at the beginning of class and are considered late if received afterwards.)

**ATTENDANCE:** (This section is used to restate the university absence policy [FE]. The instructor can add a section on tardies and student responsibility for missed assignments.)

Students who arrive late for class are assumed absent, unless they speak to the instructor after to class. Students who are habitually late will be warned first. If the behavior continues, these absences will count and the student will receive an FE.

**PLAGIARISM:** (This section is not necessary, but instructors can add to the statement found in the General Syllabus if they wish.)

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT:** (While this section shouldn't be necessary, some instructors find it necessary for freshmen.)

- Be respectful of who is talking at all times.
- Always be prepared for class.
- Avoid rude behaviors such as reading materials from another class, sleeping, placing your head on your desk, wearing hats that cover your eyes, wearing sunglasses, or eating meals in class.
- Turn off your beepers and phones before entering class.

Should you be unable to meet these expectations, you will be dismissed from class and marked absent.

**COURSE OUTLINE:** (This section lists the readings and assignments for the semester. Some instructors list by class meeting, others by the week. It is acceptable to have only the first four to six weeks of the class outlined. Writing courses sometimes need to be flexible to accommodate student needs. It is best to begin this section with a disclaimer. NOTE: The example readings given below are fictional.)

The schedule below is subject to change depending on class members' ability to assimilate material, timing changes, and acts of Nature. The instructor reserves the right to add or delete readings and assignments as needed. (Note: W – Wordsmith; BH – Bedford Handbook).

WK 1 Intro to Course; Diagnostic Essay; Grammar Skills test.

WK 2 Intro to process and paragraph writing. W1-30. In-class writing.

WK 3 Paragraph writing; grammar review. BH 302-400.

WK4 Continued. W 49-55.

WK 5 Continued. W 58-75.

WK 6 Continued. Grammatical Sentences, BH 283-300.

WK 7 MIDTERM; in-class essay. W 80-100; BH 23-40.

WK 8 The Essay. W, 113-145.

WK 9 Continued.

WK 10 Writing Conferences.

WK 11 Describing a scene. W 146-160.

WK 12 Providing examples. Editing for sentence clarity. W 161-170; 327.

WK 13 Making comparisons. W 171-183.

WK 14 TBA; Thanksgiving Break.

WK 15 Writing an Exam Essay. W 192-200.

WK 16 Review for Final; Final.

---

#### **4.5 Writing Center**

As mentioned in the General Syllabus above, English 0990 students are required to attend a tutoring session once a week in the Writing Center. During the first week of classes, students are to report to the Writing Center and schedule a meeting with a tutor. Writing Center tutors will visit all English 0990 classes during the first week of class and explain the process of registering with the Center and the requirements of these sessions. Attendance in the Writing Center is mandatory, and students should receive an FE in English 0990 if they miss two (2) or more weekly sessions with their tutors. See section 9.1 for more information about the Writing Center and its services.