This course focuses on writing for college and for the world beyond. You will write a variety of nonfiction pieces, including academic papers and personal essays. You will also be encouraged to try other modes, such as journalistic reviews, editorial pieces, lab reports, letters, or stories. The course will emphasize the writing process (how to function as a writer) as well as the product (the qualities of a good paper). We will dispel harmful myths about writing and will approach writing as a rewarding activity that benefits the writer, who learns by composing, and the reader, who is informed, enlightened, or entertained. In this course we will be both writers and readers: that is, we will be writing pieces for others to read and reading pieces that others write for us.

When you enter higher education, you get intensive exposure to various disciplines or fields, each of which constitutes a “discourse community.” Discourse communities are groups of people with their own ways of communicating about topics in which they share an interest. They employ specialized terms and formats, writing in conventionalized genres that members of the group have come to expect. For example, biologists, literary theorists, and cognitive psychologists have all developed ways of writing that fall under the general heading of academic discourse. Within academic discourse there is a lot of variation: Biologists may write lab reports, literary theorists may write speculative essays, and cognitive psychologists may write experimental studies or reviews of prior research. Beyond the boundaries of academia, we all participate in other discourse communities in which we may use forms such as letters, personal essays, journals, emails, text messages, and tweets. This course will help us form a writer’s community to explore and pursue the various discourses in which we participate.

We will treat writing as a vehicle for discovering and refining ideas, not just a device for recording pre-existing knowledge. I would also like us to think of our writing, as much as possible, as real communication aimed at each other. The course will include readings on the process of writing and articles on various topics, including discourse communities. There will be frequent writing assignments and conferences with the instructor to review written work. Most classes will be peer response workshops. Several major themes will inform the course:

1. The value of writing as a vehicle for discovery and learning. (Writing is often generative, not just expressive.)
2. The need for revision to clarify the writer's ongoing discoveries. (Revision lets us re-envision and recast our work.)
3. The recognition that writing is social and interactive, not just individual. (Our creations are influenced by others.)
4. The importance of context and situation in forming a piece of writing. (Adapting to circumstances is essential.)
5. The crucial role of reading in the shaping of a text. (Our writing becomes other people’s reading.)
6. The link between personal and academic writing. (Often they are separate, but they can reinforce each other.)
7. The effects of a diverse society on writing and discourse. (Varied backgrounds yield diverse discourses.)

**Classes and Conferences:** Classes meet Tuesday & Thursday, 10-10:50 a.m. In lieu of a third class session, I will meet in conference with each student every other week. (Conferences will begin in Week 2.) Classes will allow you to write for—and get advice from—your peers, and conferences will enable you to work individually with me.

**Writing Requirement:** This is a Writing-Intensive (W-Int) course that counts toward the College of A&S Writing Requirement. A&S students must pass two “W” courses (W-Int or W-Adv) to meet the requirement.

**Requirements for successful completion of this course:** You must submit all the writing assignments, attend class regularly, give one draft presentation, and submit a portfolio that includes your final research paper and three of your best essay revisions. The portfolio will be due as an email attachment on Thurs., Dec. 19, at 11:00 a.m. (OVER)
**Attendance:** Regular attendance is required. If you have more than two unexcused absences during the semester, you may be penalized one letter grade. I am enforcing a strict attendance policy—not to be authoritarian or punitive, but to emphasize that your presence in class is crucial to our work. This will be a hands-on, participatory course in which you are expected to take an active role. If you are absent when it is your turn to present a draft, it will be impossible to conduct the session. If you are absent when you are expected to be part of the audience for a classmate’s presentation, it will strain our efforts to hold an effective workshop. So please make every effort to attend class. If you must be absent, let me know. Also please be on time. Late arrivals are distracting and discourteous to your classmates, especially when they are leading workshops. Of course we all have days when we are unavoidably delayed, but please take seriously your responsibility to be on time.

**Writing Assignments:** There will be one assignment in writing or rewriting weekly: either the draft of a new paper or a major revision of a previous one. Most papers should be 4–5 pages in length (1,200–1,500 words) except for the final project (10–15pp or 3,000–4,500 words). I will hand out a new assignment each week, but you should also do some revisions of previous papers. Major revisions may be done in place of new assignments.

**Honor Code:** Please write the honor code pledge on all assignments and sign your name following it: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.” For more information on the honor code, go to [https://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot](https://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot)

**Topics:** Each week I will provide many topic options from which you can choose. You may also develop your own topics. If you want to work on a paper that is actually due in another course, I am happy for you to do so, and I will usually accept such assignments in place of the ones I give. However, please be sure to get permission from the instructor of the other course. Note: If you believe that you are a writer who responds poorly to freedom of topic choice, let me know, and I will then dictate a topic that you must write on. Also, if you believe you need practice with writing academic discourse, please pick one of the academic options from the weekly assignment sheets. As a last resort, I can “force” you to write on an academic topic, but I’d rather you took the plunge of your own free will.

**Submitting Work:** Papers must be submitted on time. All drafts and revisions should be word-processed. Please use double spacing or 1.5 spacing for your papers. Also please attach a Cover Sheet to each paper, whether for peer response sessions, presentation workshops, or submission to me. I will hand out blank Cover Sheets with each new assignment.

**Grading:** This is a graded course. However, as much as possible, I would like you to put aside the pressures that come with grading and try to adopt a trial-and-error mentality, feeling free to take risks that may help you improve your work. Rather than dwell on grading, I hope we can concentrate on the tasks before us and draw inspiration from the challenges and rewards of writing: discovering, expressing and communicating ideas; solving problems; and informing, enlightening, and entertaining each other. To facilitate this approach, I will use what is generally called “contract grading.” If you (1) attend regularly, (2) participate in all course activities with commitment, and (3) do all the required assignments at an acceptable level, you will earn a B. If you do all the above and pursue your work with exceptional intensity and write very effective papers, you may earn a grade in the A range. If you don’t meet the contract, you will get a C, D, or F, depending on how much you depart from the contract (e.g., more than two unexcused absences will cost you one letter grade). Rather than put grades on papers, I will write extensive comments on them. If you are concerned about your grade, I will be happy to discuss with you in conference where I think you stand. Also, I will invite you to submit a final self-evaluation that I will consider as I determine course grades.

**Books/Readings:** *Rethinking Writing* by Podis/Podis—Available on Blackboard (“Library readings”)
*The Norton Reader*, 13th Ed., by Peterson/Brereton—Available at the Bookstore
*Working with Student Writers* Second Edition by Podis/Podis—Available at the Bookstore
Websites: [http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/resources/writing-resources.dot](http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/resources/writing-resources.dot)
WEEK 1
Tues., Sep. 3.....................**First Class Meeting:** Check class registration and do introductions. Review of syllabus. Assign. #1 will be handed out. For next class read *Rethinking Writing*, pp. 1–17 (available on Blackboard) and do Assign. #1 (This assignment may be handwritten.)

Thurs., Sep. 5.....................**Bring your completed Assign. #1 for class discussion.** I will ask you to sign up for a bi-weekly conference, and I will also hand out Assign. #2. For next class (Tues., 9/10), compose a draft of Assign. #2 and read *Rethinking Writing* (*RW*), pp. 17–39 & 394–402. In *Working with Student Writers* (*WSW*), read Chapter 3 (pp. 33–37).

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**WEEK 2**
Tues., Sep. 10....................**Bring a draft of Assign #2 to class.** Today I will hand out the **Draft Presentation Schedule** for the first module (listing when people will present their papers to the whole class in a workshop format). In the first part of class today, we will go over the Guidelines for Response in *Rethinking Writing*, pp. 25–28. During the second part of class, please exchange your draft of #2 with a partner. After you get advice on your draft, revise it to submit at our next class (9/12).

**Note:** Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis begin this week for students in Sequence 1.

Thurs., Sep. 12....................**Revised #2 due today.** I will hand out Assign. #3. A draft of #3 is due for peer response Tue., 9/17. Main activity for today: Our first **Scheduled Draft Presentation to the class.** For next week: *RW*, Ch. 2 & 200–208; *WSW*, Ch. 8 (75–85); *NR*: 1–3 & 3–11.

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**WEEK 3**
Tues., Sep. 17....................**Peer Response Sessions.** Bring a draft of Assign. #3 to class and exchange with a partner to read and respond to each other’s work. Based on advice you receive, revise #3 for submission on Sep. 19.

**Note:** Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis begin this week for students in Sequence 2.

Thurs., Sep. 19....................**Revised Assign. #3 due.** Assign. #4 handed out. Bring a draft of Assign. #4 to class on Tues., Sep. 24 for peer response. **Main activity for today:** **Scheduled Draft Presentation.** For next week: *RW*: 74–95 & 406–408; *WSW*: Ch. 12 (115–23); *NR*: 15–24 & 380–386.

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**WEEK 4**
Tues., Sep. 24....................**Peer Response Sessions** for Assign. #4. Read and respond to each other’s drafts. Then plan to revise Assign. #4 based on the advice you receive and submit it in class Thurs., Sep. 26.

**Note:** Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis this week for students in Sequence 1.

Thurs., Sep. 26....................**Submit revised Assign. #4 today.** I will hand out Assign. #5—a draft of #5 will be due in class Tues. (Oct. 1) for peer response sessions. **Main activity for today:** **Scheduled Draft Presentation.** Reading for next week: *RW*: 95–112 (optional: 493–506); *WSW*: Ch. 11 (105–10); *NR*: 79–83.

(OVER)
WEEK 5

Tues., Oct. 1.......................Peer Response Sessions. Bring a draft of Assign. #5 to class for peer response. Revise the paper after you get advice from your partner and submit it in class Thurs., Oct. 3.

Note: Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis this week for students in Sequence 2.

Thurs., Oct. 3......................Revision of Assign. #5 due. Assign. #6 handed out. Bring a draft of Assign. #6 to class on Tues., Oct. 8 for peer response. Main activity for today: Scheduled Draft Presentation. For next week: RW, Ch. 4 and (optional) pp. 506–515; WSW, Ch. 24 (255–62); NR, 886–90 & 890–99.

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WEEK 6

Tues., Oct. 8.......................Bring a draft of Assign. #6 for peer response. Plan to revise #6 to submit in class on Thurs., Oct. 10.

Note: Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis this week for students in Sequence 1.

Thurs., Oct. 10.....................Revision of Assign. #6 due. Assign. #7 handed out. Bring a draft of Assign. #7 to class on Tues., Oct. 15 for peer response. Main activity for today: Scheduled Draft Presentation For next week: RW, Ch. 9 and (optional) pp. 516–528; WSW, Ch. 25 (263–68); NR, 818–31 & 1107–09. Also read Jacob Weisberg’s “Thin Skins” (handout).

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WEEK 7

Tues., Oct. 15.....................Bring a draft of Assign. #7 to class for peer response. Based on advice from your partner, plan to revise #7 for submission at our next class on Thurs., Oct. 17.

Note: Individual conferences w/Prof. Podis this week for students in Sequence 2.

Thurs., Oct. 17......................Revision of Assign #7 due. Assignment for fall break will be handed out. Main activity for today: Scheduled Draft Presentation. (There are no additional assigned readings over fall break.)

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WEEK 8

Week of Tues., Oct. 22 & 24:

Fall Break—No Classes. Our next class meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 29. During break, in addition to working on your writing assignments, please reflect on your work for the first half of the course and on the strengths and weaknesses of our writing course. We can discuss your thoughts at the start of class on Tues., 10/29.

Note: I will hand out the schedule for the second module the week before Fall Break (Week 7).