



ENGLISH 100: INTENSIVE READING, WRITING, & REASONING

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This accelerated composition class focuses on developing the reading, writing, research, and critical-thinking skills necessary for most college-level courses. It provides a highly structured, intensive, and supportive framework for studying academic texts and doing scholarly research. Students are required to write 8,000 words, including research-based writing with proper MLA documentation and formatting.

COURSE THEME: "INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS"

Our course theme provides a general focus for our reading, writing, and research but also leaves some room for students to follow individual interests. Throughout the semester, we'll reflect on ourselves as we read and discuss our class materials and as we write in response to questions such as these:

- What are good strategies for academic success?
- What are our assumptions about gender?
- What risks should we take? What are our boundaries?
- What helps us connect with others effectively?

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Dr. Jason Wohlstadter
Office: 260E Founders Hall
Phone: 575-6180
email: wohlstadterj@mjc.edu

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:15-10:30
and by appointment

Our class is a place for everyone to learn challenging material, concepts, and skills. I'm here to help you meet that goal. One way I can do that is by meeting with you one on one during my office hours and appointments.

Class Meeting Times:

- **Section 8342:**
FH 277, M-Th 8:00-9:10 am
- **Section 8355:**
FH 235, M-Th 11:10-12:20
- **Section 8360:**
FH 237, M-Th 12:45-1:55

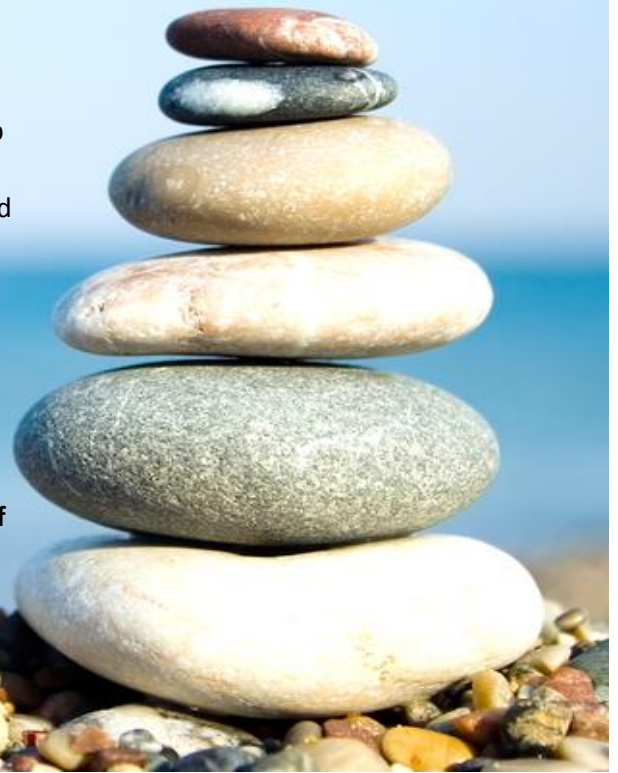


General Advice: How to Succeed in English 100

In class, we'll encounter lots of challenging material and concepts. Here are eight things that will help you rise to the challenge:

"The Magnificent Eight"

- ✓ **Utilize student support services** (office hours, L&LC, DSPS, student success specialists, counselors, and computer labs).
- ✓ **Develop peer support networks** (form peer study groups, collaborate to accomplish challenging tasks, reach out for help when absent).
- ✓ **Focus on the process of learning, not the grade** (recognize and appreciate your growing skills and knowledge).
- ✓ **Take class and reading notes daily** (review them daily).
- ✓ **Bring assigned readings to class completed and annotated** (don't worry if parts of the reading seem confusing).
- ✓ **Be open to challenges and support your classmates** (try out new ideas and skills in class and assignments; be receptive to and respectful of views that challenge your way of thinking).
- ✓ **Participate in class regularly and always ask for clarification if you feel lost, confused, or frustrated.**
- ✓ **Start research early** (don't wait until the last minute).



It also helps to check out our class website:

← <http://wohlstaderj.faculty.mjc.edu/>

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

What Will I Be Able to Do by the End of ENGL 100?

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, you will have demonstrated the ability to do the following:

1. Read and think critically;
2. Select credible sources;
3. Legitimately use scholarly sources by A) summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and documenting according to MLA conventions, B) integrating source ideas with your own ideas, and C) avoiding plagiarism;
4. Write papers that demonstrate competent control over written language, academic form, style, and tone.

Time Commitment

It takes time to read the materials, conduct research, and produce the essays for this class. Be prepared to spend at least 10 hours a week on work outside of class.

Assignment Descriptions

What Kind of Writing & Thinking Will You Be Doing?

All assignments are designed to strengthen your academic skills: actively engaging with texts, summarizing and evaluating sources, thinking critically, and producing reader-based, thesis-driven writing. This work will be challenging, and though it may be difficult at first, as you learn more, and as we work together, you'll be equipped to meet the academic demands.

Text-to-Self Essay

Relate personal experience to a Unit 1 text about academic success.

Text-to-Text Essay

Use at least two Unit 2 sources to support an argument about gender issues concerning girls and women.

In-Class Essay

Use at least two Unit 2 sources to support an argument about gender issues concerning boys and men.

Text-to-World Essay (Starting the Research Essay)

Choose multiple sources from Unit 3 (or its supplemental texts) to write a position paper that sets the groundwork for your research paper on a current controversy.

Annotated Bibliography

Select, summarize, and evaluate sources for your research essay.

Text-to-Texts Essay (The Research Essay)

Revise your previous paper and expand it with substantial research. Include examples of real-world efforts to remedy the problem you're studying.

In-Class Final Essay

Our final will be on *The Book of Unknown Americans*.

In-Class & Out-of-Class Assignments and Activities

The reading and writing process is enhanced by this work, which includes group activities, in-class writing, peer review, proficiency demos, student-led presentations, Writing Center visits, and out-of-class assignments.

For due dates, please see our Class Assignment Schedule.

Course Materials You'll Need

- Our English 100 Course Reader
- Our English 100 Course Packet
- *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez
- Access to these two films: *Miss Representation* & *The Mask You Live In*. Both will be viewed in class, and both are available through MJC's library's WorldCat/[Kanopy](#) database.
- A binder for handouts and classwork, and paper for taking notes and writing journals
- Reliable access to a word-processing program, the Internet, and a printer
- Two large green books for in-class essays

★ **This course has a technological component.** You will need to compose essays on a computer, access some class materials online, and upload papers to Turnitin.com. Students can access the internet for free at [MJC's computer labs](#).

Important Class Dates

- **January 26:**
Last day to drop without a W
- **April 4:**
Last day to withdraw
(and receive a W)
- **Beginning April 27:**
Finals Week

Please check our Class Assignment Schedule for the exact day and time of your English 100 final.

Destinations for Success: Top Three Places to Visit

Founders Hall 260E (my office)



Where should you go if you're feeling lost or overwhelmed in this course?

Frustration is a normal part of learning. Please ask questions in class or talk with me after class if you feel lost or overwhelmed; you may not be the only one with the same concern, and we all gain from working things out together.

Please feel free to see me during office hours or schedule an appointment.

The Library's Writing Center



[The Writing Center](#) is part of the [Library & Learning Center](#)

Here trained tutors will empower you to be a more skillful writer, reader, and critical thinker.

Do you want some extra assistance with your coursework?

You can work with a trained tutor on any part of the assignment process:

- How to "read" college-level texts
- How to make "academic moves" in your writing
- Brainstorming and prewriting
- Revision and paragraph arrangement
- Grammar and punctuation
- MLA formatting
- Writing Center visits may be required. Details will be provided in class.

For an appointment, call 575-6346 (MJC East) or 575-6676 (MJC West).

The Student Services Building



Could support outside the classroom help improve your success in class?

[MJC's Student Services](#) offer assistance in these areas and more: Counseling, Disability Services, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), Student Financial Services, Health Services, the Umoja Community, and the Veterans Services Office.

Please let me know if I can help connect you with any of these services.

Accommodations for Students: MJC is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical or learning disabilities. The college encourages students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of class to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments. For information, contact [Disability Services](#) in Student Services, Rm. 112 (575-6225).



Note: If there's ever anything you'd like me to know about your circumstances, please feel free to communicate with me.



Course Policies: Q & A

What's your attendance policy?

Given the challenging content of this course and the accelerated approach to the material, your attendance is essential to your success. Students who miss class, arrive late, or leave early are more likely to fall behind given the fast-paced nature of English 100.

If you are absent, late, or leave early, please keep in mind that you have the responsibility to find out missed information, notes, and homework assignments.

Second-Day Rule: When students are absent on the second day of class, their spot may be given to students on the waitlist, so please be sure to attend the second class (or contact me beforehand) to secure your spot.

Students with more than eight absences (in a MTWR class) may be dropped from the course. Students with more than four absences (in a MW or TR class) may be dropped from the course.

What's your late assignment policy?

The late assignment policies depend on the three different assignment types:

1). Essays:

- Final drafts of essays can be turned in up to one week late, but each one counts as a "revision."
- Students are allowed to revise two essays--except for the Research Paper and the Final, which occur too late to revise.
- If a student chooses to revise a non-passing essay, the student has up to one week (after the essay has been returned) to revise and re-submit it for a passing mark.
- Because late and revised essays are submitted in unexpected intervals and stray from our assignment schedule, those essays can't be guaranteed the usual amount of feedback.
- Essays are due at the beginning of class. This means, for example, that an essay due on Monday at 8:00 that is submitted at 8:15 will be considered late (and uses up a revision). This helps make our classroom a better learning environment because it discourages disruptions.
- The in-class final cannot be taken late.

2). Proficiency Demos: These in-class, written demonstrations of learning cannot be done late. Missing and non-passing proficiency demos (PDs) will affect a student's grading contract, but a PD can be made up by earning three effort marks (for more details, see our grading contract).

3). In- and Out-of-Class Tasks: Some of these can be submitted one class late for half credit, but some can't. The kind that can't be submitted late are tasks that depend on class participation to complete. For example, group activities, peer review, and in-class writing responding to concepts discussed in class can't be done outside class, so that work can't be done late. On the other hand, out-of-class tasks, such as a homework journal, can earn half credit if submitted one class late.

Accommodations for unavoidable absences: please let me know about your situation if circumstances prevent you from being in class and submitting work on time. Unavoidable absences include situations such as documented illnesses and emergencies. In addition, students who will be absent due to involvement in college activities, such as a field trip, are encouraged to check with me about the possibility of making arrangements beforehand, not afterward.

What's your submission policy?

All drafts of essays need to be typed, printed, and in MLA format. In addition, final drafts of essays also need to be submitted to Turnitin.com, which will be explained in class.

Students who can't be in class the day a major essay is due can still submit essays on time online by using Turnitin. Work e-mailed to me, however, generally is not accepted unless a student has been granted accommodations (due to unavoidable absence, for example). Please see "Accommodations for unavoidable absences" (above) for more details.

What's your submission policy? (Cont.)

Tip: If time is short and you're wondering if something you want to submit over e-mail will be accepted, rather than waiting for a reply (and risking late work), if your work is ready, it's a good idea to e-mail it along with your request for an accommodation. **NOTE:** After submitted work is returned to you, please hold on to all work in case there ever is a discrepancy about credit for it.

What's your policy regarding technology in the classroom?

Please help us stay focused and connected as a group in class: **Remove headphones and keep electronic devices silent and out of sight.**



To minimize distraction, laptops are not allowed in class without permission, and permission depends on evidence that laptops are necessary and not distracting to others.

What's your policy regarding class discussion?

One of the best things students can do in class is participate in our discussions. Please contribute to the class environment by sharing your views and by being mindful of others. Even though input is always appreciated, please note that if individual students have already been generous in sharing ideas on any given day, there are times when those students will be praised but passed over to promote a greater diversity of voices. All students will be invited to share ideas in our class.

What's your policy regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty?

MJC has a college-wide definition for academic dishonesty, which covers plagiarism and its consequences. You're expected to produce original work in our class and cite any sources used in your writing.



Please see MJC's statement on "[Academic Integrity](#)." This policy includes self-plagiarism. Click on our online syllabus link for more on [Plagiarism](#). It's taken seriously; please do not attempt it. Always come see me if you're having difficulty with an assignment.

Contract Grading: Information and Q & A

General Overview of Contract Grading



This semester we're going to use an innovative idea that aims to increase meaningful learning by reducing the stress of focusing on grades. It's an alternative kind of grading called "contract grading." There are no points or letter grades in this course, aside from the final letter grade you'll earn at the end. The premise of contract grading is that if you really engage in the learning process and do the work required to earn a C or above, you'll see a significant improvement in your learning. Traditional grading systems can encourage you to work for points and letters as if learning were a game, perhaps even a tedious one, with a certain grade as its goal. Contract grading aims to reduce anxiety about grades and redirect focus on to the process of learning.

Contract Grading Information

Because contract grading aims to lower stress about grades and shift focus back to the learning process, none of our assignments will be graded with a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F). They'll be evaluated only as passing/not yet passing or complete/incomplete, but because education policies require letter grades, each student will receive an overall grade at the end of the course. To minimize the focus on grades and to reduce uncertainty about them, the requirements for each grade have been kept as clear and simple as possible and are listed below.

Important Note: Each grade includes three categories (essays, tasks, and demos). For any given grade, each category must be fulfilled to earn that grade—that's the minimum requirement. **This means the lowest result in any category determines the course grade.** For example, passing five essays and four demos but missing nine tasks earns a C. This example assumes no "marks of exceptional effort" are included; to learn more about those marks, please read below.

TO EARN AN "A"

- ✓ PASS all 6 Essays
- ✓ Complete all (but may miss up to 5) Tasks
- ✓ PASS all 4 Proficiency Demos
- ✓ Earn & retain 15 marks of exceptional effort

MARKS OF EXCEPTIONAL EFFORT



These marks can be earned for signs of exceptional effort, including exceptional work and exceptional growth in essays and in class, and by doing extra credit. More details follow.

TO EARN A "B"

- ✓ PASS at least 5 out of 6 Essays (and complete all)
- ✓ Complete all (but may miss 6-7) Tasks
- ✓ PASS 3 out of 4 Proficiency Demos

TO EARN A "D"

- ✓ PASS 3 out of 6 Essays
- ✓ Complete all (but may miss 10-11) Tasks
- ✓ PASS 1 out of 4 Proficiency Demos

TO EARN A "C"

- ✓ PASS 4 out of 6 Essays (and complete all)
- ✓ Complete all (but may miss 8-9) Tasks
- ✓ PASS 2 out of 4 Proficiency Demos

TO EARN AN "F"

- ✓ PASS 2 out of 6 Essays
- ✓ Complete all (but may miss 12-13) Tasks
- ✓ PASS 0 out of 4 Proficiency Demos

Our Grading Contract Includes These Features:

- Two revision opportunities to pass essays (except for the Research Paper and the Final, which occur too late to revise).
- Half credit for *some* tasks completed one class late (see Course Policy Q & A on late assignments for more details)
- Ways to know how you're doing, such as grade checks, essay feedback, and rubrics (See Contract Q & A #5 for details).
- **A special guarantee that, with effort, you'll earn at least a B, but this guarantee has requirements and conditions.**

The requirements for a B are listed above. For example, you'd need to pass 5 of 6 essays--and those need to be clearly passing, not borderline. This means the guarantee assumes you'd be able to demonstrate proficiency, but if essays aren't yet passing consistently enough, a B simply can't be granted. The guarantee also assumes you'll be highly engaged in the learning process, which the contract indicates will be demonstrated by completing a number of in- and out-of-class tasks and by passing a number of proficiency demonstrations (PDs), which are like planned quizzes we prepare for together.

Marks of Exceptional Effort

- **Once earned, these marks can either be used or saved.**
- Used marks serve to make up work: one mark makes up for one missing task; three marks makes up for one missing or non-passing proficiency demo.
- Saved marks can be collected to earn an A.

To qualify to earn an A in the course, students need to earn and retain 15 marks of exceptional effort.

- Marks can be earned by showing exceptional work and growth, but in order to accumulate the full amount required for an A, the majority of those marks will need to come from demonstrating exceptional essay work.
- A limited amount of marks is available through other means, such as showing exceptional improvement, showing exceptional involvement in class, and doing extra credit, and those kinds of marks can definitely improve course grades but not enough to earn an A.

Contract Grading: Q & A

QUESTION 1

Why don't we just use traditional grading?

I understand it takes time to adjust to new ideas. As a teacher, I've been using traditional grading for over twenty years, so any alternative to it seems very disorienting to me at first.

For decades, however, educational psychologists have been discovering what many of us have probably already figured out: grading can have negative effects. According to Alfie Kohn's "The Case against Grades," these are some of the problems with traditional grading: it can "promote a fear of failure," "create a preference for the easiest possible task," "diminish students' interest in whatever they're learning," "increase . . . levels of cheating," and mask the complexity of the learning process since the achievement indicated by letter grades is reductive and simplistic.

QUESTION 2

If we still get a grade at the end, what's the point?

An overall letter grade will be assigned at the end of the semester because education policies beyond our classroom require it. Despite the need to abide by those regulations, we still have some power to move in the direction that would seem to serve students best, and hopefully that movement will inspire others as well. So even if our grading contract ends with a letter grade, our contract allows all our assignments to go without them (aside from P or NYP), and this move is meant to shift our attention away from points and letters and onto the learning process itself.

QUESTION 3

This sounds too good to be true. What's the catch?



Contract grading expects a lot from students, even if its approach is different. In our contract, you can see exactly what's required to earn each course grade. Students who pass the course are allowed a certain amount of essay revisions, missed assignments, and non-passing work, but the highest grades are earned by those who fulfill the terms of our contract at the highest levels with regard to essays, demos, tasks, and marks of exceptional effort, as specified by our contract.

To pass this course, you need to earn passing marks on most of the essays, and you may find that challenging. In this class, passing marks are assigned to essays that are clearly passing, not just borderline. Each essay assignment comes with specific criteria for a passing mark, and if students don't clearly meet that criteria, limited revisions are available. English 100 is intended to be a supportive but challenging class. Our essay assignments, for example, are designed to be more and more challenging as the semester progresses, so it helps to stay engaged and think of each of our classes as a connected part in a series of learning opportunities that will help equip you with the skills you'll need for each new writing challenge.

QUESTION 4

This seems weird and confusing. What if I don't like it?

When I first heard about contract grading, it sounded strange to me, too. Now that I've had time to research, discuss, and think about contract grading, it seems worth trying. Using traditional grading is easy for me since I have experience with it, but I've also had a lot of experience with students, and many seem to find the typical methods of grading degrading (to take a phrase from the research on the topic). Of course, people also find a certain comfort in what they're used to, so if contract grading is new to students it may just take some time to become familiar with it.

My suggestion is this: if you ever have questions or concerns about our grading policy at any time during the semester, please feel free to share them with me. It will be good to discuss them.

QUESTION 5

How will I know how I'm doing?

While our grading contract strives to reduce the focus on grades, it also aims to reduce uncertainty about them; that's why the criteria for each final course grade is listed in the contract.

In addition, just because essays won't receive grades, it doesn't mean they won't get feedback. To make feedback as clear and useful as possible, a rubric accompanies each essay returned to you.

How will I know how I'm doing?

(Continued)

The rubrics define the criteria used to evaluate essays and allow you to see at a glance the strengths of your work and the parts that can be improved in future assignments.

What's more, in regular intervals across the semester, we'll have four grade-check sessions, where students will be able to determine their current grade status (and use it to create an updated "grade forecast") by reviewing their progress in their contracts and asking questions about it.

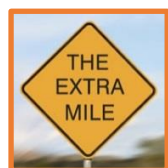
QUESTION 6

If there aren't the usual grades on assignments, what will motivate me? Why should I even try in my essays?

Among those who study motivation, two kinds are often discussed: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. "Extrinsic" is when people are motivated to do things for outside reasons or rewards. "Intrinsic" is when people do things for themselves and their own sense of satisfaction. In my opinion, both forms can be useful, but from what I can tell, experts overwhelmingly argue that real satisfaction comes from intrinsic motivation, and they also connect meaningful learning with intrinsic motivation. Receiving points is an example of extrinsic motivation. It can work, but experts suggest it works in a superficial way. Real writers, for example, don't write for points; they write because they find satisfaction in using and refining their skills. All human beings enjoy feeling skilled at doing things. In this class, I hope you find satisfaction as you strengthen your skills in reading, writing, and reasoning. Even though your essays won't be marked with letter grades, they will include feedback to help you see ways to improve your skills. And if extrinsic motivation is what inspires you to improve, be sure to see Question 7, which covers the topic of effort marks.

QUESTION 7

What's the "M.E.E. Box" in our grading contract?



This box reveals a part of our grading system that seems more in line with traditional grading and extrinsic motivation than contract grading and intrinsic motivation. The reason for adding the box and making this compromise is the flexibility "Marks of Exceptional Effort" (M.E.E.) can bring to our contract, and I think you'll find this flexibility makes the benefits of this box outweigh its drawbacks. Consider the following scenario, for example.

What if a situation prevented a dedicated student from completing a task, and suddenly the student went from an A to B on her contract? And let's suppose the situation did not qualify as an "unavoidable absence" but was something else, like missing a bus. In a case like this, the ability to earn marks by putting in extra effort and going "the extra mile" makes it possible for that student to demonstrate her commitment and reclaim her grade. Information about what it takes to earn these marks is included in our contract and will be discussed in class in greater detail.

QUESTION 8

If I don't get a grade for participation in class, why should I even participate?

The success of this class depends on your participation. I've served as the teacher in about a hundred class sections, and it surprises me how different each class can be! I've learned that I'm pretty much the same in my classes and that my students have a lot of control over our class experience. I hope you take advantage of that power and help make this class a fun place to be and a good place for learning.

To me, a good learning environment is a place where students feel comfortable, so I think you'll find I try to keep things somewhat casual in class, especially since it helps to generate lively class discussions. For a good learning environment, we also need a variety of students to express their views, so don't be surprised if I invite you to join in and share your thoughts.

Although our class environment may feel somewhat relaxed, being casual shouldn't be confused with behavior that distracts and disrupts our class. Using electronic devices, talking out of turn, arriving late, leaving early, and other such behaviors will need to be addressed, simply because those things can't continue to go on unchecked if we want to maintain a good learning environment. Students should know that I will need to talk with them about their role in caring for our class environment if the situation ever calls for it.

The Small Print: Changes can be made to the class contract but only if both the instructor and the majority of the students agree to the changes. After the last class meeting, changes to the contract can be made by the instructor, but only if the changes have no negative impact for all students, only a positive impact or no impact.