

Science Fiction and Science Fact: The Writings of Isaac Asimov

Writing 100H
Spring 2006
CHS room 200 2nd Period MWF

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Dr. Carl Salter
Collier 228
Hours: T 10:30-12:45
campus

Content and approach

This is the college's required freshman course on writing. Our focus will be on the development of "writerly" attitudes for summaries, essays, and academic writing. I hope you will learn to approach writing like writers, not like students. To help you focus on the development of your writing and the development of your writing process, this course will emphasize portfolios as semester-long projects and contract grading (see below).

We will read samples of writing by Isaac Asimov, including two of his "robot" novels. We will also read many of his essays on science. The content of your own writing in this course should focus on science fiction and science fact—by seeing how a "master" did it, I hope you will be able to improve your own writing about science.

You will develop, in multiple-draft style, **four major writing projects**. These writing projects will be developed both through your individual work in and out of class and through small group workshops in class. In workshops, you will be both giver and receiver of advice about writing. Through these workshops, you should learn greater awareness and control over your own writing, greater sensitivity to writing problems and their solutions, and a heightened sense of the power of the writing process.

You will also compile a **portfolio** of your writing projects. Due in final form during final exam week, your portfolio will be a semester-long project. It will contain multiple drafts of your major writing assignments; and a reflection on the writing assignment. Of the four projects that you will complete at various times in the semester, you should select **two for further revision** and inclusion in your final portfolio.

Grades and requirements

In all your formal writing—essays and final portfolio—the most important qualities you are to learn and demonstrate are *completeness*, *commitment* to your writing, and *attention to the writing process*. This section of Writing 100 will use **contract grading**, whereby much of the suspense

and anxiety students commonly feel about grades will be reduced if not eliminated. By meeting certain requirements and consistently exhibiting certain behaviors, you will earn a **B** for the semester. Lower grades will result from marked deficiencies in either of those areas or in attendance. Higher grades will result from special excellence in attention to the writing process, excellent quality of final written products and special attention to the revisions that your two selected essays receive in the final portfolio. The terms of the grade contract for a **B** for the semester are listed below:

1. Complete, on time, all exercises from assigned sections of *The Bedford Handbook*, 6th ed.
2. Complete, on time, all special writing exercises that are handed out over the semester.
3. Complete, on time, all (4) **writing projects**—formal essays that will develop from Practices, other written exercises, reading, question sets, and class discussion. Each of these projects will include, at a minimum
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->some prewriting committed to paper
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->a first or rough draft of the project
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->at least two significantly and substantively (or deeply or globally) revised drafts, one of which is to be prepared “clean” for editing
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->a neat and correctly formatted final draft
 - <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->a piece of reflective writing

The preliminary drafts in each project will normally be accompanied by notes and reviewers’ comments. All components of each project must be ready at the beginning of class as assigned.

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4. Participate actively and constructively in small-group workshop sessions in class.
5. Have at least one reviewing session with a Writing Center tutor.
6. Satisfactorily complete, on time, a research exercise.
7. Miss no more than 3 class meetings, unexcused, and no more than 5 total, excused and unexcused. (“Excused” means your absence from class is accounted for in writing by a responsible authority.) **Each unexcused absences beyond 3 will cost your semester**

* Each writing project will be evaluated quantitatively in terms of the following point system:

"Practices":	5 points each	Workshop participation:	10 points each
Prewriting (outlines, clusters, freewriting, "zero" drafts, etc.):	10 points each	Writing Center visits:	5 points each
First draft:	10 points	Absence from any workshop:	-5 points each
Revised draft:	10 points for first, 5 points for each successive	Lateness with any assigned writing prior to final drafts:	-2 points/day
Clean-for-editing draft:	10 points each copy	Lateness with any final draft:	-3 points/day
Final draft:	10 points		

grade 1/3 letter.

Responsibility and attendance

For the workshops to benefit you, your regular and prompt attendance is crucial. Please be in your seat with your day's work in front of you ready to start at 9:10 a.m. each day. You are responsible for all material assigned or covered in any class you miss, whether the absence is excused or not.

Classes on Fridays are particularly important, because your groups will meet for revision sessions. In addition, Friday will be "vocabulary day and grammar day". On Friday every student will present a vocabulary word to the class. One student will present advice from at least four style books on a point of English word usage.

The Four Projects

Opinion/Argument: Develop an opinion piece based on the essays *The Relativity of Wrong* and *Pure and Impure: The Interplay of Science and Technology*. 1500 words. What are Asimov's main ideas (theses) in these two essays? What do the essays say about Asimov's view of science? Are the two essays consistent, or are they contradictory? Develop evidence from the two essays to support your claim. Do you agree with Asimov's view of science? Have these two essays changed your view of science? If so, how?

Research Paper: Develop an idea about science or science fiction based on ideas in Asimov's writing. 2500 words. You can develop your idea from either one of the two novels, or *World of Carbon*, or an essay by Asimov other than *The Relativity of Wrong* and *Pure and Impure: The Interplay of Science and Technology*. In addition to the reference to Asimov, your paper should have at least six sources; at least one book, at least two web sites, and at least three articles from peer-reviewed journals.

Literary Criticism: Develop a literary critique of some aspect of Asimov's fiction, based on either a chapter from *Caves of Steel* or a story from *I, Robot*. 1500 words.

Creative Writing: Develop a piece of fiction. 1500 words. This is your chance to try your hand at writing a science fiction story (or part of one)! You can also choose to write a poem or a description of something that doesn't exist, like a new type of robot.

Textbook

Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
(*Bedford* in assignment schedule)

Books

The Caves of Steel, Isaac Asimov

I, Robot, Isaac Asimov

The World of Carbon, Isaac Asimov, chapters to be assigned

Essays

The Relativity of Wrong

Pure and Impure: The Interplay of Science and Technology

Other materials

You should have a notebook dedicated to Writing 100 work alone. It can be spiral-bound or ring

binder, as you wish. *Do your assignments from Bedford in the notebook. As you read the Asimov writing assignments, take notes in the notebook.* Keep whatever writing you do by hand in this notebook. Always bring it to class.

At the same time, I strongly encourage you to do all your written work on a computer; the campuswide network has word processing applications that you may access from various sites on campus, and anyone who wishes a short demonstration session may arrange one with me. If you do work in the electronic environment, of course, store your work on a diskette or thumb drive or in your own folder on the X drive on the campus network.

Clean-for-editing drafts and final drafts of all essays are to be printed out from an electronic word-processing application.

Tentative Assignment Schedule

Week 1
M 1/16 – F 1/20
Course introduction: essay projects, rules of writing, handbooks.
Bedford “How to Use This Book and Its Web Site,”
Tutorials 1, 2, 4 & 5 (pp. xxi-xxviii)
Discuss Asimov’s essays

Week 2
M 1/23 – F 1/27
First draft of opinion essay 1/27
Bedford Sections 51, 54, 55 avoiding plagiarism

Week 3
M 1/30 – F 2/3
Library research tutorial, Monday (2/1) and Friday (2/3)
Bedford Sections 49, 50 research

Week 4
M 2/6 – F 2/10
FIRST ESSAY PROJECT FOLDER DUE 2/10
Bibliography for research paper 2/10
Bedford Section 3, 4 revising

Week 5
M 2/13 – F 2/17
First draft research paper 2/17
Bedford Section 22, 23 pronouns

Week 6
M 2/20 – F 2/24
Second draft of research paper 2/24
Bedford Section 10, 11 words, construction
Sing up for mid-term conferences

Week 7
M 2/27 – F 3/3
SECOND ESSAY PROJECT FOLDER DUE 3/3
Questionnaires
Bedford Section 58 writing about literature

Spring break
Sa 3/4 – Su 3/12

Week 8
First draft of literary criticism

M 3/13 – F 3/17 *Bedford* Section 12, 15 dangling modifiers, variety

Week 9

M 3/20 – F 3/24 *Bedford* Section 32, 33 commas, other punctuation

Week 10

M 3/27 – F 3/31

First draft of creative writing 3/31

Week 11

M 4/3 – F 4/7

Second draft of literary criticism 4/7

Bedford Section 8, 9 active verbs, parallelism

Week 12

M 4/10 – Th 4/13

THIRD ESSAY PROJECT FOLDER DUE *

Bedford Section 16, 18 words and wordiness

Sign-up for portfolio conferences

Week 13

Tu 4/18 – F 4/21

Second draft of creative writing

Week 14

M 4/24 – F 4/28

FOURTH ESSAY PROJECT FOLDER DUE *

Conferences

Course evaluation

Week 15

M 5/1 – F 5/5

(final exam week)

Portfolios due

* Half the class will have their essays read by a tutor in the Writing Center.

GUIDELINES

Writing 100

Texts

Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook*, 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.
Plus any additional text(s) chosen by instructor.

Course Description and Objectives

Writing 100 introduces writing as a communication process that is central to learning and life. In this course, you will work collaboratively in workshop settings and practice both oral and written communication. The subject area focus of each section of Writing 100 will involve reading and discussion of ideas and styles, and because Writing 100 focuses on college-level reading and writing, students will begin to sharpen the critical reasoning skills needed for success in any academic discipline at Moravian.

By the end of this course, students will

- Understand writing as a way of thinking and demonstrate that in the act of writing a writer may construct new knowledge
- Understand that success in writing lies in attention to the process as much as in the form of the final product and experience the power of collaboration as part of that process
- Increase their ability to read critically and comprehensively and to synthesize ideas from sources with their own ideas
- See how reading and talking about writing contribute to the development of writing abilities
- Gain facility in writing in a variety of genres for a variety of audiences
- Gain experience in using technology for research and writing and demonstrate competence in finding materials through research and in citing them in an academic style
- Become aware of errors in grammar, usage, punctuation and spelling that may impede a reader's understanding and increase their facility in avoiding or correcting such errors
- Be able to format a paper for an academic reader

Course Requirements

Each student enrolled in Writing 100 will complete several pieces of writing, formal and informal, graded or ungraded, this semester. You should expect to receive suggestions from your instructor or classmates as you develop writing assignments through multiple drafts. Individual conferences, written comments, small group workshops—all may be used to help you answer the questions that accompany planning, writing, revising, and editing a piece of writing.

At least one writing assignment should involve substantial use of Reeves Library. You will be responsible for investigating and developing a workable topic as you learn to implement the skills of research. By the time you complete Writing 100, you should be proficient in the following “**basic competencies**”:

- Define a research need
 - Formulate a research topic
 - Determine an information need
- Plan and execute a search for information
 - Identify key terms and concepts
 - Identify the most appropriate sources of information
 - Use Boolean operators and truncation where appropriate
 - Impose limiters (e.g., scholarly vs. popular, date, language)
 - Modify the search based on search results
- Know how and where to find the sources discovered in the search process
 - Determine which sources the library owns or provides access to and retrieve them
 - Request material not owned by the library on Interlibrary Loan
 - Locate material faculty may have put on reserve in the library
- Understand the obligation to credit sources and be able to do so in an appropriate citation style

Writing as a Process

Writing is more than simply a report of what you know and see; it’s also an important way of exploring a subject. Developing a finished piece of writing through time and involving the recursive steps discussed below can deepen your understanding of the world and yourself in a way that reading and thinking by themselves cannot. By practicing writing in this way, we hope that you can eventually become your own teacher/editor and be able to use writing as a way of learning. Here is a brief review of the essential steps. They are based upon what we know about how successful writers actually work.

Prewriting (or planning) is the work you do before composing and includes those important early decisions about purpose, your audience, and a style to fit. Prewriting also means reading, taking notes, talking to others, outlining, or freewriting—in other words, gathering together your information and thoughts.

Writing (or drafting or composing) those first words on a blank page is sometimes the most difficult step, often preceded by procrastination and anxiety that the writing will not work and that you might fail. Beginning writers should remember that it is neither natural nor possible for the words to come out just right the first time. Trying to make each sentence perfect before going to the next is one of the worst things to do. Writing takes time and often trial and error to become exact. The process we follow at Moravian allows time for your unique mind and your store of language to work together.

Therefore, writing the first draft should be the fastest part of the process. You should write freely and without concern for style or mechanics in order to probe your ideas and let the act of writing help you discover what needs to be said. This first draft should be an open conversation

between you and the writing. But for this conversation to move forward, you the writer must continue to put words on paper and respond to those words by writing more. Most any words will do to start the ball rolling, to set up this dialogue between you and the page. You are simply using writing to make yourself think in a sustained way about your topic. You aren't even sure yet what you wish to say. What comes out may surprise you. But at least give yourself a chance to let your thoughts flow in writing without trying to make each sentence correct before going to the next.

The best advice is not to fret over a first draft. Simply get something on paper to work with. Concentrate on filling up on the pages with words. If you get stuck, reread what you've written or consult your outline and then force yourself to start moving the pen or the keys on the keyboard again, even if you have to write, "I'm stuck and I don't know why. What I wish to say is. . . ." Most of all, make a mess. Paper is cheap, but the price is dear of trying to get everything right on the first draft.

Revising is the crucial stage. Indeed, it has often been said that good writing is rewriting. It is through multiple drafts that a piece of writing is developed to fulfill the writer's purpose for a reader. You may add paragraphs and sentences while deleting old ones, or restyle flabby sentences and sharpen word choice now that the ideas are clearer. You may even "trash" much of what you've written in a first draft as your purpose and your sense of yourself in relation to your audience becomes sharper.

Writing on a computer can be of great advantage. You can produce clean multiple drafts fairly quickly, and you can use aids such as automatic style, spelling, and grammar checkers. Do be careful to save earlier drafts of your work, as your instructor will probably wish to see the various stages of your work. Also, some instructors may ask you to provide copies of earlier drafts to some of your fellow students for their suggestions for improvement.

The secret to writing successfully is, above all else, the willingness to revise and pride in doing so. Professional writers expect to revise words, sentences, and paragraphs. Always ahead in this stage of revision are several opportunities to get it right.

Final editing and proofreading await you at the end of the writing process--at the very end. For the first time the writer becomes a police officer, inspecting and verifying the grammar and spelling and punctuation. Good writing is much more than good grammar, but for most academic essays, the two go together. So writers at this point become anxious that no spelling or grammatical blunder will interfere with a reader's ability to understand and enjoy what was written.

You won't always have as much time as you would like for every essay. All of us, students and teachers alike, must learn to live within the limitations of this special version of life called college. But you can still practice this process of writing, learning to anticipate each stage and the writing problems that are a part of it. Someday your success will almost certainly depend, at least in part, on your ability to write meaningfully and to write with style. This semester is the time to start to get ready for that moment.

Writing Center

The Writing Center, on the second floor of Zinzendorf Hall, is there to support the efforts of all writers at Moravian College. The tutors there are students who are good writers and who are professionally trained to help you improve your writing. They will go over an essay draft with you and guide your understanding of how you might improve that draft. You could also drop by

to pick up some of the free handouts on virtually every part of writing: getting started, writing a thesis, developing paragraphs, eliminating wordiness, using commas, and the like. The Writing Center is generally open Monday-Thursday afternoons and Sunday evenings during the semester. Its phone number is 861-1592.

Learning Services Office

If you have a learning disability and believe you may require accommodation to succeed in this course, you should contact the Learning Services Office at 1307 Main Street. Do this as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AT MORAVIAN COLLEGE

Policy on Academic Honesty

Moravian College expects its students to perform their academic work honestly and fairly. A Moravian student, moreover, should neither hinder nor unfairly assist the efforts of other students to complete their work successfully. This policy of academic integrity is the foundation on which learning at Moravian is built.

The College's expectations and the consequences of failure to meet these expectations are outlined below. If at any point in your academic work at Moravian you are uncertain about your responsibility as a scholar or about the propriety of a particular action, consult your instructor. In general, you should be guided by the following principles.

Guidelines for Honesty

All work that you submit or present as part of course assignments or requirements must be your original work unless otherwise expressly permitted by the instructor. This includes any work presented, be it in written, oral, or electronic form or in any other technical or artistic medium. When you use the specific thoughts, ideas, writings, or expressions of another person, you must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source. Direct quotes from any source (including the Internet) must be placed in quotation marks (or otherwise marked appropriately) and accompanied by proper citation, following the preferred bibliographic conventions of your department or instructor. It is the instructor's responsibility to make clear to all students in his or her class the preferred or required citation style for student work. Student ignorance of bibliographic convention and citation procedures is not a valid excuse for having committed plagiarism.

When you use the specific thoughts, ideas, writing, or expressions of another person, you must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source.

You may not collaborate during an in-class examination, test, or quiz. You may not work with others on out-of-class assignments, exams, or projects unless expressly allowed or instructed to do so by the course instructor. If you have any reservations about your role in

working on any out-of-class assignments, you must consult with your course instructor. In each Writing 100 class and in the Writing Center, we try to establish a community of writers who can review and provide helpful criticism of each other's work. Although no students in your class or in the Writing Center should ever be allowed to write your paper for you, they are encouraged to read your work and to offer suggestions for improving it. Such collaboration is a natural part of a community of writers.

You may not use writing or research that is obtained from a "paper service" or that is purchased from any person or entity, unless you fully disclose such activity to the instructor and are given express permission.

You may not use writing or research obtained from any other student previously or currently enrolled at Moravian or elsewhere or from the files of any student organization, such as fraternity or sorority files, unless you are expressly permitted to do so by the instructor.

You must keep all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments until a final course grade is given. In the case of work in electronic form, you may be asked to maintain all intermediate drafts and notes electronically or in hard copy until final grades are given. All these materials must be available for inspection by the instructor at any time.

Plagiarism

A major form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which we define as the use, whether deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment; an "outside source" is defined as any work (published or unpublished), composed, written, or created by any person other than the student who submitted the work (adapted from *Napolitano vs. Princeton*). Instructors often encourage—and in the case of research essays, require—students to include the ideas of others in their writing. In such cases, students must take care to cite the sources of these ideas correctly (in other words, to give credit where credit is due). *The Bedford Handbook* provides guidance in using several systems for documenting sources.

At Moravian, if a Writing 100 instructor suspects plagiarism, the student will be asked to show the notes and rough copy used in preparing the paper. The instructor also has the right to see any books or periodicals that were used. The grade for the paper will be suspended until these materials have been reviewed. An instructor who suspects a student of violating the policy on academic honesty with regard to an assignment, requirement, examination, test, or quiz will consult with the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum, using a blind copy of the work in question, to verify the violation. If the charge is verified, the instructor will, in almost all cases, assign either a grade of zero to the academic work in question or a failing grade in the course in which the violation occurred. The student must be informed in writing of the alleged violation and penalty; a copy of this memo must be sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.