

Writing 100 – Counting on the Media

Fall 2006 Syllabus

Class Meetings: PPHAC 235, TTh 2:20-3:30pm

Texts: *Bedford Guide* and *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*

Website: <http://math.moravian.edu/hartshorn/writ100>

Instructor: Kevin Hartshorn

Office Hours: PPHAC 215, MW 9-10am, WTh 1-2pm, *or by appointment*

e-mail: hartshorn@moravian.edu

With newspapers, television, and the internet, we have access to an endless font of information. The challenge is filtering the information to find a sense of perspective and to place the latest story in the appropriate context. We shall draw on the latest headlines to delve into the issues that are affecting us today, paying special attention to the role that numbers play in creating a story. Statistics, poll numbers, and other quantitative information give articles an air of objectivity that might not be warranted.

Writing 100 introduces writing as a communication process that is central to learning and life. You will work collaboratively in workshop settings and practice both oral and written communication. Our work in this course will develop and sharpen the critical reasoning skills needed for success in any academic discipline at Moravian College.

1 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives for this course are essentially those for the general Writing 100 program, as described in section 5.2. In essence, the objectives are:

- Seeing writing as a way of thinking and constructing knowledge
 - To understand writing as a *process* that leads to a deeper understanding of our world.
 - To cultivate an awareness of how writing *style*, *format* and *audience* influence how a topic is understood.
 - To recognize the role and limitation of numerical information in writing about and understanding current events.
- Writing in a variety of styles
 - To differentiate writing *analysis* of a topic versus *opinion* on that topic, and to write in either voice effectively.
 - To develop an authoritative voice that stems from relevant citations, effective sentence and paragraph construction, and consistent theme and tone.
- Effective use of research
 - To use information technology independently and effectively for both research and writing.
 - To cultivate a critical eye to reading, asking questions of accuracy, relevance, and dependability of resources.
 - To develop the ability to ask questions of news articles that lead to deeper research, study and effective writing.

2 Grades and Requirements

Everyone will receive a final percentage score for the class that I will translate into a letter grade at the end of the semester. That percentage will be based on the following factors.

- 10% Journal entries:** Collected at the end of each month to check for completeness
- 10% Homework/Quizzes:** Writing practice from the *Bedford Handbook*, library scavenger hunts, short quizzes on the news of the day.
- 20% Portfolio:** A completed portfolio of work will be due during finals week. A list of the required contents will be provided during the course.
- 40% Major projects:** Your grade for the projects will depend not only on the final version of the project, but also on the process used (prewriting, revision, etc.).
- 10% Participation and peer-review:** Everyone is responsible for helping their classmates improve in their writing. In addition, there will be two collaborative efforts in class to create a “news magazine.”
- 10% Key events:** Everyone will be required to demonstrate (1) satisfactory attendance of an information technology session at Reeves, (2) completion of a review session with a Writing Center tutor, and (3) discussion with me in my office regarding at least two major papers.

In addition, note that **you are expected to attend every class**. You may miss as many as 2 class meetings, unexcused, or as many as 5 meetings, total excused and unexcused, without direct penalty. Each missed meeting beyond that will cost your final semester grade 5 percentage points.

Excused absences include illnesses or family emergencies (if properly documented) as well as sports competitions or field trips (if I am properly notified *in advance* of the day missed). Note that as the professor for the course, I make the final decision regarding whether an absence is excused or unexcused.

In all cases *you are responsible for any material presented or due in class, regardless of your attendance.*

3 Course Format

The following activities are planned over the course of the semester:

1. **Journals:** Everyone will keep a diary of news events throughout the semester. There will be two general entry types:
 - *Open reflection entries:* I expect everyone to keep up-to-date on the news (e.g.: by reading the *New York Times*). At least 3 times per week, you will write journal entries reflecting your observations and insights relating to the news of the day.
 - *Guided reflection entries:* Throughout the semester, I will suggest specific topics for reflection. Your journal entries on these topics will be in addition to the open reflection entries.

Details will be provided in a separate handout.

2. **Homework and quizzes:** Any homework assigned needs to be ready for submission at the beginning of class on the due date. In-class quizzes will assess your reading for the week, as well as your general awareness of current events.

3. **Portfolio:** Everyone will need to compile a portfolio demonstrating their work throughout the semester. While the exact contents of the portfolio will be based on the work through the semester, you can expect to include:
- Article analyses based on readings of Paolos' *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*
 - Finalized versions of each major project
 - Reflections on course activities: class discussions, collaborative efforts, writing as a process, etc.
 - Complete progress activity for several smaller projects.

Information on the portfolios will be provided later in the semester.

4. **Major Writing Projects:** There will be three writing projects that will demonstrate an ability to work through the writing process:
- A *news analysis* piece on a topic current to the semester
 - An *opinion* piece on a current news topic
 - A *background* piece that provides information needed to place a current news event into the appropriate context

In addition, the class will collaborate to form a “news magazine” based on these projects. Details on the news magazine will be discussed in class near the mid-term.

5. **Discussion and Participation:** Class time will generally be spent in discussion. Topics are to include current work or writing assignments; peer review of work in progress; how the most recent news colors ongoing course work; the role of numbers and numeracy in current news stories; collaborating to fill in “background” information needed to understand today’s news stories.

There will also be classes focusing on particular topics of writing and research, including:

- At least one trip to Reeves to learn how to conduct research and evaluate resources
- A discussion of the editorial process for newspapers, including the role of AP and Reuters and how articles are generated
- Peer review for each of the major assignments
- Collaborative sessions in completing the class “news magazine”

4 Notes and Disclaimers

- The syllabus is subject to change over the semester. For the latest version of the syllabus, please visit <http://www.math.moravian.edu/hartshorn/writ100/>.
- Final determination of your course grade is subject to my judgement as course instructor.
- My office is always open if you have questions, comments or suggestions. If you miss me in my office, you can send e-mail to hartshorn@moravian.edu.

4.1 On open discussion

This course touches on news of the day, including many sensitive areas – the war in Iraq, the Israel/Lebanon crisis, the mid-term elections to name a few.

As an active member of society, I have opinions about many of these topics, as should you. The goal of this course is not to change your opinion or to espouse any one particular belief. Rather, it is to analyze the various opinions on the news topics and examine how these different opinions drive current events.

Everyone in this class is free to hold their own opinions – I recommend that all opinions are left open to analysis and reexamination. However, grades will not be based on personal beliefs or particular opinions espoused. Rather they will be based on your ability to speak and write coherently, using clear logic and resources that are well-documented and objectively evaluated.

5 General Guidelines for Writing 100

These guidelines are common to all sections of Writing 100 at Moravian College.

5.1 Texts

- Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook*, 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2002.
- Any additional texts chosen by the instructor.

5.2 Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces writing as a communication process that is central to learning and life. Through it, students should:

- regard writing as a way of thinking and
- understand that in the act of writing on a particular subject for a particular audience, a writer will construct new knowledge.

This course helps students:

- write in varied styles for varied audiences,
- use research materials and cite them appropriately, and
- use technology as a tool for research and writing.

Students will work collaboratively in workshop settings and will 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. Because Writing 100 focuses on college-level reading and writing, you will begin to sharpen the critical reasoning skills needed for success in any academic discipline at Moravian.

5.3 Course Requirements

You will complete several pieces of writing, formal and informal, graded or ungraded, this semester. Generally, essays will be written in stages, and you will receive suggestions from your instructor or peers for each step. Individual conferences, written comments, small group workshops – all may be used to help you answer the questions that accompany prewriting, writing, revising, and editing a piece of writing.

For at least one of the papers you should make substantial use of our library. You will be responsible for investigating and developing a workable topic as you learn to implement the skills of research. This essay should use a minimum number of sources, as determined by the instructor, not counting general reference works such as encyclopedias.

5.4 Writing as a Process

By practicing a set procedure for writing, we hope that you can eventually become your own teacher/editor and be free to use writing as a way of learning. Writing is more than simply a report of what you know and see; it's also an important way of exploring a subject. Working through the stages of writing can deepen your understanding of the world and yourself in a way that reading and thinking by themselves cannot. 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.

5.5 The Writing Center

The Writing Center, in Room 102 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.

5.6 Learning Services

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.

5.7 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.