

## **ENG 225: Op-Eds & Argument**

- Tuesday/Thursday 1pm-2:20pm
- **Professor:** Patrick Harris
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- **Office:** BAC 268
- **Office Hours:** TBD

### **Epigraph**

"Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress."

-- Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

### **Introduction**

In essence, the goal of this class is to improve your writing skills. We will focus specifically on the area of persuasive argument. Throughout the semester, you will choose a topic of interest and become a specialist in it. By the end of the semester, you should be able to explain the topic in simple language, and make a compelling arguments about the topic to a wide range of audiences.

### **Required Texts**

Instead of a textbook, students will be required to maintain a digital subscription to the New York Times. Subscription information can be found here: <http://www.nytimes.com/subscriptions/edu/lp1474.html> (This will cost approximately \$25 for the entire semester, which is an average price for a single textbook.)

### **Daily Expectations**

**Reading:** Students are expected to read the daily briefing section of the New York Times every weekday. It is very short and offers a quick summary of the news of which they should be most aware (according to the New York Times, at any rate). Additionally, students will be responsible for reading the Opinion section published on Monday and Wednesday (i.e. the day before each class session) and the contents of the Sunday Review (published, as the name implies, each Sunday).

If the professor feels that these requirements are not being met, quizzes may be implemented, but hopefully that will not be necessary.

Students are, of course, encouraged to read more, and reminded that it is in their best interest to scan (at the very least) the front page headlines for information about their chosen topic as often as possible.

**Writing:** This is an advanced writing class, so writing will be expected. On days when papers are not due, you will turn in a brief journal entry. The journals will be approximately 250 words, and will be assigned based on our class discussions.

**Participation:** Your active participation in class is expected. We will discuss in class the various ways in which one might actively participate in a class.

### **Papers**

The goal of this class is to build toward one large project at the end of the semester, which will be assembled from individual components crafted throughout. Here is an overview of the assignments:

1. What's At Issue?: Explain the nature of your topic and why it matters. Think of this as a topic proposal.
2. Short Argument: Make your argument in the form of a brief academic paper. In many respects this is practice for your next assignment.
3. Op-Ed: Craft three brief arguments about your chosen topic. These arguments will be geared toward The Miami Student, The Hamilton Journal-News, and The New York Times. Each should be publishable by its target paper; each will be submitted as an opinion piece for publication. (Grading does not depend on acceptance!)
4. Definition Draft: Engage in definition; the "background" of their argument. This writing will be incorporated into the final paper.
5. Causal Draft: Lay out the history of your issue. This writing will be incorporated into the final paper.
6. Evaluation Draft: Talk about why the situation you've outlined to date is a problem. This writing will be incorporated into the final paper.
7. Final Paper: Assemble your Definition, Causal, and Evaluation drafts into one cohesive document. Add a Proposal section: Now that you've explained the problem, how do we fix it?

### **Grading**

Assignment	Points
Participation	60
Journals (14 @ 10 pts each)	140
Paper #1: What's at issue?	75
Paper #2: Short Argument	75
Paper #3: Op-Eds	150

Paper #4: Definition Draft	100
Paper #5: Causal Draft	100
Paper #6: Evaluation Draft	100
Paper #7: Final Paper	100
Total	1000

## **Policies & Procedures**

**Attendance:** It is Miami University policy that every student is expected to attend every class meeting. Since this is a discussion-oriented course, your attendance is crucial, and key to successfully completing assignments. Regular attendance will greatly elevate your chances of performing well. Simply showing up for class, however, will not be enough. I expect this class to be the site of lively intellectual activity, discussion, debate, and critical but respectful exchange. Accordingly, timely arrival is crucial. That said, I will allow you to miss three classes, after which your grade will drop one tier (C+ to C or A- to B+) per absence. Two late arrivals equal an absence. If you miss more than 25% of the class (20 minutes) you are considered absent. Please note that this not “three free skips plus excused absences,” this is three absences. Use them wisely.

**Plagiarism:** The assumption in English 225 is that the writing you submit is your own original writing—that is, produced originally for this class. To copy someone else's writing without acknowledging that use is an act of academic and professional dishonesty, whether you borrow an entire report or a single sentence. The most serious forms of academic dishonesty are to “buy” an entire paper, to have someone else write an assignment for you, or to turn in someone else's entire paper (or significant portions of an existing piece of writing) and call it your own. These forms of dishonesty constitute serious breaches of academic integrity. If you have doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others' writing ethically, ask the instructor. For further details about Academic Integrity at Miami University—including a detailed list of examples of academic dishonesty and procedures and penalties for dealing with instances of academic dishonesty—see <http://www.muohio.edu/integrity/undergrads.cfm>.

**Assignment Submission:** Papers should be in MLA format. There is a thorough guide to MLA style online at the Purdue Owl and we will review this information in class; no excuses will be accepted for incorrect citations or formatting.

All essays will be submitted via Niihka or Google Docs, as appropriate to each assignment, and must be submitted before the start of class on the day they are due. All assignments must be turned in on time. Final grades on papers will be downgraded one whole grade for each day late--for example from A to B--unless you have made prior arrangements for an extension. First, please note that “a day” is each period up to 24 hours--the penalty begins as soon as the paper is late. Second, please note that extensions are available for exceptional circumstances only.

**Backing up Work:** Make sure to have a plan for backing up all of your digital work in multiple places in case of computer failure. Please also make sure to save all of the

writing you complete for class. You are responsible for data loss! Consider a real-time backup program such as Dropbox.

**Accommodations:** I assume that all of us have different ways of learning, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please communicate with me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them. You may also obtain additional information and support from the Office of Learning Disabilities Services 513-529-8741 or The Office of Disability Resources 513-529-1541.

**Niihka/Daily Schedule:** The daily course schedule and more detailed assignment prompts will be available on Niihka. The course schedule is subject to change based on the needs and interests of the class. You are responsible for regularly checking Niihka for updates, as well as regularly checking your Miami email address.

**Distractions:** Please silence your cell phone and refrain from texting. While we will regularly use laptops for in-class writing, research, and collaboration, please refrain from using your laptop for non-class activities. Additionally, side conversations are not acceptable.

**Respect:** Since this is a discussion-based class, it is vital that you listen and speak respectfully to others at all times. I encourage you to express your opinions, of course—they will help inspire good discussions. In other words, you are allowed and expected to speak your mind at all times, as long as you can do so without being a jerk.

**Problems:** If you run into problems or emergencies, talk to me as soon as possible!

## **Resources**

**Classmates:** Rely on one another for the questions you have regarding the readings, the work we're doing in class, software we may be using, etc. You all, both individually and as a collective, embody a vast bank of knowledge and experiences.

**Instructor:** I will do all I can to assist you in succeeding in this course. Feel free to meet with me during my office hours or another scheduled time. Email is a reliable way to contact me and I will try my best to respond in a timely manner.

**IT Support:** The IT support desk is the main point of contact for technology questions at Miami, including issues with connecting to MU wireless. You can call 513-529-7900, email [ithelp@muohio.edu](mailto:ithelp@muohio.edu), or go to 317 Hughes Hall.

**Writing Centers:** The Howe Writing Center is located on the main floor of King Library. The Center is staffed with writing consultants from many different academic areas. In a

one-on-one workshop, a staff member will consult with you concerning work-in-progress, final drafts, research style, and many other aspects of writing. It is best to schedule an appointment ahead of time, but you may also walk in on days when they have consultants available. For further information, visit the student resources site at <http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/>.

**The Student Counseling Service:** Located in the Health Services Center, this office provides a wide range of counseling services. For more information, call 513-529-4634. Also, they have puppies. No kidding. Call them.

### Tentative Schedule

Tuesday 1/27	
Thursday 1/29	Journal #1
Tuesday 2/3	Peer Review of "What's at Issue?" Paper
Thursday 2/5	What's at Issue? Due
Tuesday 2/10	Journal #2
Thursday 2/12	Journal #3
Tuesday 2/17	Peer Review of Short Argument
Thursday 2/19	Short Argument Due
Tuesday 2/24	Journal #4
Thursday 2/26	Journal #5
Tuesday 3/3	Journal #6
Thursday 3/5	Journal #7
Tuesday 3/10	Peer Review of Op-Eds
Thursday 3/12	Op-Eds Due
Tuesday 3/17	Journal #8
Thursday 3/19	No class meeting—professor at conference.
Tuesday 3/24	Spring Break
Thursday 3/26	Spring Break
Tuesday 3/31	Peer Review of Definition Draft
Thursday 4/2	Definition Draft Due. No class meeting—professor at conference.
Tuesday 4/7	Journal #9
Thursday 4/9	Journal #10
Tuesday 4/14	Peer Review of Causal Draft
Thursday 4/16	Causal Draft Due
Tuesday 4/21	Journal #11
Thursday 4/23	Journal #12
Tuesday 4/28	Peer Review of Evaluation Draft
Thursday 4/30	Evaluation Draft Due
Tuesday 5/5	Journal #13
Thursday 5/7	Journal #14
Thursday 5/14	Final Papers due @ 1pm (handed in online; no meeting)