Howard University  
Department of English  
Freshman English 002

Course Overview
The eloquence of the spoken word and the devotion to writing—the art of language by line—are highly valued in African American culture. James Baldwin succinctly expresses the importance of these values when he tells us, “People evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate.” You are heirs of a long tradition of peoples who equate reading and writing with the expression of self-identity, self-possession, self-empowerment, and self-esteem. It is also a tradition that considers the self uncultivated unless, in the words of William Edward Burghardt DuBois, it acquires broad sympathy (an understanding of others through the understanding of the self)—knowledge of the world that was and is (historical consciousness) and of that self’s relation to the world. The mission of all writing courses in the Department of English at Howard University to carry forward and transmit to you a liberating tradition in reading and writing skills. You may then use these skills in your and the world’s best interest.

Course Description
Freshman English 002 is designed to help students develop expository writing skills. Expository Writing conveys information or explains what is difficult to understand. To prepare you to explain your ideas clearly, Freshman English 002 stresses critical thinking; provides instruction in logic, grammar, and documentation (where necessary); and encourages debate and discourse about contemporary issues, especially about issues of concern to the African American community. Each year, students in this course read a common text to encourage debate and to participate in and contribute to contemporary discourse about that text. This year, this course has adopted the University-wide common text, Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Something Torn and New. Learning communities will be held during the first two months of the semester to help you engage this text meaningfully. Freshman English 002 also lays the foundation for success in Freshman English 003, upper-level courses at Howard University, and, after graduation, in whatever career endeavors you pursue.

Course Goals
This course is designed to help students develop expository writing skills through critical thinking and reading and to lay the foundation for writing in Freshman English 003 and upper-level courses throughout the University and in meeting the writing demands of the 21st century global community.

Course Objectives
Students who complete this course successfully by earning the grade of <C> or higher should be able to do the following:

- Write substantive, well-organized, clear, logical, and grammatically correct expository essays that use Standard English;
• Employ the basic modes of exposition: comparison and contrast, classification, process analysis, cause and effect analysis, and definition. These modes may be studied not as separate types of essays but as thinking and writing strategies;
• Read with attention to ideas, structure, and style and recognize the ways that writers convey their ideas and explain what is difficult to understand;
• Respond critically to print and non-print texts by summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the texts;
• Study exemplary expository writing and to learn how to emulate it;
• Improve expository writing through drafting and revision; and
• Reinforce writing and oral skills by integrating multimedia in the composing process.

Specific Course Outcomes
Achievement of the goals and objectives above should yield the following outcomes. Accordingly, students should be able to do the following:

• Clearly and fully explain an opinion, using expository strategies;
• Consistently organize ideas logically and effectively and connect them with clear transitions;
• Effectively support the main points of the essay;
• Demonstrate superior control of language, including diction and syntactic variety;
• Demonstrate superior facility with the conventions of Standard Written English (grammar, usage, and mechanics);
• Read critically and interpret fiction and non-fiction;
• Develop a sense of diction or appropriate usage;
• Clearly identify and insightfully analyze important features of a text or topic;
• Respond critically to fictional and non-fictional reading selections through summary and paraphrase;
• Synthesize information to express and support a point of view;
• Evaluate essays and other selected writing;
• Use library resources (including electronic databases) for basic research (and complete the library’s TILT activity);
• Document sources in the MLA style and integrate them effectively;
• Lead class discussions, debates, or panels (with preparation guides where appropriate);
• Give an effective PowerPoint presentation that incorporates not only text but also graphics and/or sound effects. The presentation should be related to an essay the student plans to write or has just written.

Course Requirements
Over the course of the semester, all students will compose a minimum of 4 essays, each of which will combine several modes of exposition. Students will complete a fifth major writing assignment that takes a different expository form (e.g. business letters, brochures, or poster presentation, etc). Students are expected to write essays both in class and out of class and to revise their drafts. All students are required to maintain a self-assessment portfolio that includes all graded essays and two one-page self-assessments, one at mid-term and another as an exit requirement.

Required Texts
Supplemental Texts and Materials
A standard dictionary of American English, such as The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

The Howard University Freshman English Self-Assessment Portfolio or an acceptable alternative (as determined by your instructor)

The Howard University English 002 Grammar Guide, available in the Writing Center or from your instructor electronically

Writing Submissions and Grading Procedures

Submission of Essays
To develop a professional attitude toward the details of form and to facilitate the Department's grading of papers, you will be required to adhere to certain specifications as are indicated in the following paragraphs.

Handwritten Papers
Submit all handwritten papers on 8 ½ x 11” white college-ruled theme paper with margins. Paper torn from notebooks and legal pads is, therefore, unacceptable. Regulation theme paper will be used for essays as well as for other written assignments, such as exercises, quizzes, and examinations. You should use black or blue ink. Any assignment or paper written in pencil will not be accepted. You should write on one side of the paper on every other line. You should make written work legible and neat; therefore, be sure to observe the margins. When you make corrections, draw a line through words or phrases that are to be deleted, and insert corrections directly above. Do not “block out” words; do not draw several lines through words, and do not use parentheses to indicate cross-outs. Insert missing words immediately above the line, and center them over the point in the text where they are omitted. Be sure to endorse your essays with your name, your ID number, your instructor's name, the course and section number, the essay type or topic, and the date. If the essay is a revision, it should be identified as such.

Typewritten Papers
Essays written outside of class must be typed. Typed papers should be submitted on 8 ½ x 11” white paper only, should observe 1” top/bottom, left/right margins; and should use appropriate fonts and font sizes, such as Times New Roman 12 pt font. You are responsible for correcting (in ink) all typographical errors. Number all pages with your last name and the page number ½ inch down on the top right of each page. Double-space your entire paper, including the heading on the first page. Do not use a cover page. The heading on the first page should include your name, your instructor’s name, your course name and number-section, and the date. The heading should be followed by a centered title (not underlined and without quotation marks). See Writing Matters for an annotated example.
The Self-Assessment Portfolio
During the semester, you should keep all coursework in a Self-Assessment Portfolio. The topic of the assignment and the date should be recorded on each essay in the folder, and revisions should be labeled accordingly. Your instructor will ask you to use the folder for self-evaluation and other instructional purposes. At the end of the semester, you must submit the folder to your instructor as an exit requirement. Before submitting your folder, be sure to record all of your grades and the corresponding title of the assignment. Your instructor will provide you with a detailed articulation of the grade distribution for your specific section of this course.

Evaluation of Essays
An analytic rubric will be used to evaluate essays in 002. A copy of that rubric appears at the end of this syllabus. Your instructor will review the rubric with you after your diagnostic essays have been written, scored, and returned to you. Additional commentary related to the rubric is available on the online portal on the Department’s website.

Student Resources and Classroom Policies and Procedures

The Writing Center
The Writing Center’s services are free and available to all Freshman English students; the Center is located in Locke Hall, room 100. Your instructor may refer you to the Center if he/she determines you need assistance with some aspect of your writing. If you are referred to the Center by your instructor, you must go, or you risk having your grade lowered. Tutors at the Writing Center will not proofread your paper; however, they will gladly provide assistance with specific problems (such as errors in grammar, usage, style, and mechanics). They will also help you to create viable topic sentences and thesis statements, to improve your organization and development, to navigate the research and writing process, and to understand and interpret your instructor’s assignments and comments. Your instructor will provide additional information concerning the Center’s hours of operation and location.

Attendance and Participation
Students are required to attend class promptly and regularly, to read all texts thoughtfully, and to participate actively in class discussions without exception. In the event of absences, students are responsible for the entire work assigned or covered during the class period(s) of absence. Excused absences must be officially documented. Students will be allowed to make up missed assignments and exams only when they have submitted adequate (to be determined by the instructor) documentation. Any student who does not take a scheduled mid-term or final examination must obtain the approval of his or her instructor in order to take a substitute examination. A student who does not secure such approval will receive a grade of zero for the examination missed. Students who miss more than 3 classes (on MWF) or 2 classes (on T/TH) may find difficulty earning a passing grade in this course.

Course Evaluation
At the end of the semester, all students should participate in the online course evaluations process conducted by the College of Arts & Sciences and used by the Department to strengthen our ability to achieve learning outcomes effectively.
Incomplete Grades
Incomplete grades (<I> plus the tentative grade for the work completed to date) will be submitted only in instances where documented emergencies occur near the end of the semester. Said emergencies must preclude the student from completing the final requirements of this course on time. Accordingly, an overwhelming majority of the course’s requirements must have already been met before the emergency. The written request (with accompanying documentation and justification) to be assigned an incomplete with a letter grade must occur prior to the submission of final grades. The date for which all work must be completed will be determined by me but must not exceed the limits for “Special Grade Report” submissions determined by the Office of the Provost.

Statement on Plagiarism
Plagiarized papers (work copied from a written text without documentation, a classmate’s work, or the internet) will earn a zero for the paper and potentially an “F” for the class. A record of this plagiarism will become a part of your record in the English Department and potentially in the office of the chairperson of your major department and in the office of the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. A second occurrence of plagiarism in the class or in the English Department will result in a failing grade for the class and a recommendation of expulsion from the university. See the Plagiarism handout for a detailed explanation of the offense. You should also familiarize yourself with the Academic Code of Conduct at this link: http://www.howard.edu/policy/academic/student-conduct.htm.

If your instructor uses Blackboard, s/he will likely use the Safe Assign tool to deter and detect plagiarism. Within Blackboard, Safe Assignments automatically checks students’ papers for plagiarism as students submit them online or when instructors submit selected papers to the database. All submitted papers are checked against (a) public webpages, (2) ProQuest’s scholarly databases, (3) a database of all papers submitted by students at Howard, and (4) a database of papers volunteered by students at Blackboard, Inc.’s client institutions.

Cell Phone Use in the Classroom
Under no circumstances should a student text or talk on his/her cell phone during regular class time. All cell phones should be silenced, or turned off during regular class time. Should a student receive what seems to be an emergency phone call, he/she should exit the classroom quietly and respectfully, keeping in mind that he/she is disrupting the class and should only exit for this purpose under extreme circumstances. Students are expected to remove all Bluetooth devices upon entering the classroom.

Mp3 Player Use in the Classroom
Students should not come to class nor sit through class with headphones in his/her ears. In the event that a student does wear headphones in the classroom, the instructor may ask the student to leave the classroom regardless of whether the connected Mp3 player was on or not.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students in need of accommodations due to a disability should contact the Office of the Dean for Special Student Services for verification and determination of reasonable accommodations as soon as possible after admission to the University, or at the beginning of each semester. The Dean of the Office of Special Student Services, Dr. Elaine Borne Heath, can be reached at (202) 238-2420.