

**AMBERTON UNIVERSITY**  
**e-COURSE SYLLABUS**

**COM4441.E1 Effective Writing Skills**  
**Fall 2025**

**PROFESSOR INFORMATION:**

Name: Dr. Jim Richey  
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**COURSE INFORMATION:**

COM4441.E1 Effective Writing Skills  
Level: Undergraduate  
Beginning Date of Session: Saturday, September 13, 2025  
Ending Date of Session: Thursday, November 20, 2025

**Student access available to the Student Portal: Saturday, September 13, 2025.**

*Students enrolled in distance learning courses are not assessed any additional fees for security or identity verification.*

**COURSE PREREQUISITES:**

None

**TEXTBOOK(S) AND REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

Title: Successful College Writing  
Author: Kathleen T. McWhorter  
Publisher: Macmillan  
Year Published: 2025  
Edition: 9th  
ISBN: 13: 9781319414207 or 9781319562991  
Price: Available at <http://amberton.ecampus.com>

Amberton University has an agreement with eCampus.com to provide a full-service online bookstore to students. The Amberton University Virtual Bookstore is accessible through the University's website, [www.Amberton.edu](http://www.Amberton.edu). There is also a bookstore link in the Student Portal.

The AU Virtual Bookstore provides an easy to use interface, online buyback of books, and same day shipment of most titles with an average delivery time of 2-3 days depending on the student's location. Textbook options include new, used, rental, and electronic media as available.

Since no books are sold on campus, students should plan accordingly and purchase their books in advance of the first day of class, allowing time for shipping. Be certain you are enrolled in the course before purchasing your book(s). All textbook information (Title, Author, ISBN, etc.) is available in the course syllabi so students can shop competitively. Most textbooks can be purchased from many different textbook vendors. Some textbooks may only be available on the University's Virtual Bookstore. Students should be careful to obtain the exact resource(s) required for the course.

**APA Requirement**

APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. This resource, revised according to the 7th edition, offers examples for the general format of APA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the reference page. For more information, please consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (7th ed.). All coursework at Amberton University will comply with the standards contained in the APA Publication Manual.

## **COURSE COMPETENCIES:**

The course teaches students to write to their intended readers in a concise and readable style. It is a good refresher-writing course for those who need to brush up on basic writing skills. Topics include writing basics, as well as editing, choosing subjects, and organizing documents to ensure effective writing skills.

## **UPON COMPLETION OF THE COURSE, THE STUDENT WILL BE COMPETENT IN:**

1. Organizing and implementing the appropriate rhetorical patterns for developing an idea in written communication.
2. Identifying the major types of readers and addressing the subject of the document to them.
3. Organizing a unified document into its three component parts: introduction, text, and conclusion.
4. Presenting a statement of purpose developed by means of the major rhetorical strategies of written communication: description, analysis, and persuasion.
5. Writing objective, subjective and thematic descriptive essays.
6. Analyzing a subject by means of comparison and contrast and according to the point-by-point (alternating) or subject-by-subject (dividing) patterns of exposition.
7. Describing a subject showing cause and effect relationships.
8. Analyzing a subject according to strategies of classification and extended definition.
9. Developing a personal vocabulary that precisely expresses the writer's thinking in written form.
10. Editing the writer's documents to eliminate grammatical and stylistic errors.
11. Implementing corrective procedures for revising a document for presentation in a professional setting.
12. Editing compositions for punctuation, emphasis (style), and low-information content.
13. Transforming expository information into alternative modes of expression.
14. Composing summaries of expository information.
15. Identifying techniques of persuasion in compositions.
16. Identifying the elements of argument.
17. Distinguishing between stated and implied premises and conclusions in argument.
18. Understanding and avoiding unethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

## **ACQUIRED SKILLS**

1. Document Structuring
2. Purposeful Writing
3. Comparative Analysis
4. Cause and Effect Explanation
5. Editing and Proofreading
6. Ethical AI use

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

You will need the correct edition of the textbook for my class. If you choose to use the eBook for this class, or purchase your textbooks from any dealer except Amberton, you must read and follow the important note below from the publisher of your textbook for this class. There have been some bootlegged versions that are not correct and have inconsistent pagination and missing, or altered content, which could hurt you in my class.

\* A Note from the publisher: You have a choice when purchasing your textbooks and resources for your classes. Please be aware that Macmillan Learning products may be found on other retailer's websites, but we can only support and guarantee products purchased from the bookstore at Amberton or from Macmillan Learning directly. If you would like to purchase the eBook, please go HERE:

[https://store.macmillanlearning.com/us/product/Successful-College-Writing/p/1319414206?srsId=AfmBOopMv4orfJeZnAK3Pb1cYfsz-etN\\_4ButL7io8kgNBaIX1UlyEu9](https://store.macmillanlearning.com/us/product/Successful-College-Writing/p/1319414206?srsId=AfmBOopMv4orfJeZnAK3Pb1cYfsz-etN_4ButL7io8kgNBaIX1UlyEu9)

You will be required to check your Amberton email and messaging daily, and submit assignments or tests to me at least once a week. You will usually have at least a week to complete each assignment. Do not get too far ahead and do not think of the date and time as the due date; think of it as the last possible date and time I will accept it. Do not procrastinate! Expect the unexpected. "Murphy's Law" is always in place: "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong." I will give you plenty of time to do each assignment. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit it to me. If you have computer problems etc., I will not be able to help you. Neither Amberton nor the professor guarantees your personal computer, electricity, or internet connection to function properly.

Give yourself at least 24 hours (before the final due date) per assignment. Remember computers crash, cars break down, flash drives fail, etc. Plan for these things to happen! **Once the deadline date and time for the assignment or test has expired, I will not accept it late.**

Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and can result in a student's being dropped from or failed in a class. Students are responsible for reading and adherence to Amberton and Dr. Richey's policies regarding academic integrity, cheating, and plagiarism.

- Any student who plagiarizes (claims someone or something else's work or ideas as his/her own) will either receive a zero on that assignment or receive an F in the course. The professor will make the decision in this matter. In addition, the student may be subjected to further disciplinary action from the university. There is to be NO collaborating on assignments or tests unless the professor specifically requests this. Students may NOT use Chat GPT or Artificial Intelligence programs for assignments in my courses.
- Self-plagiarism is the use of one's own previous work in another context or class without citing (or informing the professor to seek approval in advance) that it was used previously. The idea is that the writer should let the professor know that this was not the first use of the material. Self-plagiarism may also fall under possible copyright infringement. For writers who have published a particular piece such as a scientific research study or academic article, the copyright may have been allotted to the research journal or publication. Students may NOT use or reuse their work submitted in previous or other courses for work in my courses.

### ***Student's Responsibilities***

This syllabus contains information, policies, and procedures for a specific course. By enrolling, the student agrees to read, understand, and abide by the policies, rules, regulations, and ethical standards of Amberton University as contained in the current university catalog and schedule of classes.

### ***Attendance Policy:***

Regular and punctual class attendance and engagement is expected at Amberton University. In case of an absence, it is the student's responsibility to contact the professor as soon as possible. If a student intends on withdrawing from a course, it is the student's responsibility to follow the university's policy on formally withdrawing from a course. **Ceasing to attend classes does not constitute an official withdrawal.**

Attendance in a lecture course is defined as punctual arrival to, and engagement in, a full lecture session. A Student in a lecture course missing more than 20% (two class periods for weekday classes or one class period for Saturday classes) of the class meetings may be assigned a grade of an "F" or withdrawn at the discretion of Amberton University.

Attendance in a distance learning course is defined as active participation in the weekly online class sessions. "Active participation" can be defined as: submitting an academic assignment, taking an exam, engaging in an interactive tutorial, participating in an online discussion forum (or chat session), or initiating (or responding to) a communication with a faculty member about an academic assignment or the subject matter of the course. A student not meeting these requirements may be assigned a grade of an "F" or withdrawn at the discretion of Amberton University.

### ***Plagiarism Policy***

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as though it were your own. If you use another person's words, ideas, or information; or if you use material from an outside source – whether a book, magazine, newspaper, business publication, broadcast, speech, or electronic media – you must acknowledge that source. Plagiarism is a violation of the University's code of student ethical conduct and is one that is taken seriously. Amberton University operates on an honor system; therefore, honesty and integrity are essential characteristics of all who are associated with the institution. All Amberton students are expected to abide by the honor system and maintain academic integrity in all their work. Amberton University and its instructors monitor student work for plagiarism and reserve the right to submit such work to technology-based plagiarism detection services and applications at any time.

Self-plagiarism means reusing work that you have already published or submitted for a class. It can involve:

- Resubmitting an entire paper
- Copying or paraphrasing passages from your previous work

Self-plagiarism misleads your readers by presenting previous work as completely new and original. Students may not submit the same paper in substance in two or more classes without prior written permission of the instructors involved.

Amberton University students who use Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated content must adhere to the following policies:

**Originality:** Students must avoid presenting AI generated content as their own original work. It is essential to acknowledge the involvement of AI in the content creation process in order to maintain academic and ethical standards.

**Paraphrasing:** When using AI generated content, students must rephrase and/or modify the generated text. Paraphrased AI generated content should also be properly cited.

**Acknowledgement:** When using AI generated content in any assignment, proper credit must be given to the AI system that generated the content. <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Students agree that by taking this course, all required assignments may be subject to submission for a textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism and self-plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in future papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com website.

Turnitin is a writing improvement and plagiarism prevention tool which uses special algorithms, to compare text-based student submissions to the Turnitin database and other online sources. Turnitin produces a detailed **similarity report** that can be customized and viewed by instructors and students.

Turnitin "Draft Coach" is a Google based add-on to Turnitin which supports students in developing high-quality academic writing; and serves as an integrity coach. Draft Coach helps address errors and improve the quality of student's writing by highlighting grammar mistakes, identifying incorrectly cited sources, and scanning for similarity across several databases. By providing formative feedback on how to address citation issues, incorrect grammar, and matches with the Turnitin database, Draft Coach provides explanations to help students become more confident writers, capable of producing higher quality work both in academics and in the workplace.

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR:**

You have until the day and time (Central Standard Time) listed on the assignment to submit the work to me in Moodle as a Word (.doc) attachment. Points will be deducted if this is not the case. Each assignment should be submitted in chronological order during each availability period. It is also extremely important to check your class email and messages daily.

Below is a list of assignments/tests and the corresponding deadline dates for all graded work in this class. You may submit your assignment or test anytime between the respective availability dates for each assignment. Note all deadlines are on Central Standard Time.

| Week | Topic                                  | Assignment                            | Competencies Covered  | Due Date |
|------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| 1    | Student Introductions, Goals, and read | Discussion Board Post AND Goals Essay | 1, 2, 3,10            | 9/22/25  |
| 2    | Description                            | Descriptive Essay                     | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5         | 9/29/25  |
| 3    | Process Analysis                       | Discussion post                       | 1, 4, 9, 14           | 10/6/25  |
| 4    | Process Analysis                       | Process Essay                         | 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, | 10/13/25 |

|   |                              |   |  |          |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|----------|
|   |                              | (TEST)  | 11, 13, 14                                       |          |
| 5 | Comparison and Contrast      | Comparison and Contrast assignment            | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14              | 10/20/25 |
| 6 | Cause and Effect             | Cause and Effect assignment                   | 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14              | 10/27/25 |
| 7 | Argumentation and Persuasion | Discussion post                               | 1, 4, 15, 16, 17                                 | 11/3/24  |
| 8 | Argumentation and Persuasion | Peer Review                                   | 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 | 11/10/24 |
| 9 | Argumentation and Persuasion | Argumentative Research Paper (TEST/Final Exam | 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17     | 11/17/24 |

### GRADING CRITERIA:

All assignments (quizzes, discussion posts, and others) will be averaged together for a total of 60 percent of your final grade. I will, however, drop your lowest assignment grade (does not include tests). There will be at least two test grades this semester. All tests (including the final) will be averaged together for a total of 40 percent of your final grade. I do NOT drop the lowest test grade. One of the problems with online writing is the breakdown in nonverbal communication about certain comments. It is very difficult to get each and every mistake in an assignment to the student in great detail. That is why for my online classes I grade the assignment holistically, which means I take everything into consideration: grammar, format, organization, following directions, attention to detail etc. and all of that determines the final grade. So, if you see general comments about your assignment such as "Watch the grammar in places," it means just that. If you want a breakdown of your assignment, line-by-line etc., you will need to set up a conference time with me (by phone), and we will go over your assignment together. But, I will not get into grammar specifics through email; it is too tedious.

### Undergraduate

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 90 – 100 | A |
| 80 – 89  | B |
| 70 – 79  | C |
| 60 – 69  | D |
| Below 60 | F |

### GRADE NOTIFICATION AND INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK:

A successful distance learning experience requires a flow of communication between instructor and student throughout the session. Instructor comments are considered essential to the learning process. Therefore, each assignment/exam submitted will be reviewed, graded, and returned to the student in a timely manner along with the appropriate commentary. Students should carefully review all comments.

Final grades are processed approximately one week after the last day of the session and may be located in the My Grades section of the online registration portal as well as being emailed to the student's Amberton University email. Amberton University staff will not release grades over the phone. University instructors will not leave a message with comments or grades in any type of media that is not secure.

For questions regarding grades after the semester has ended, students should use their university email account and contact the instructor at the faculty email address as provided above in *Professor Information* area.

### Incomplete Grades

An "I" (incomplete grade) is given at the discretion of the professor and may be given only when an emergency or illness prevents the student from completing course requirements. Should an "I" be granted, the student has

30 days from the end of the session to complete the conditions of the incomplete. An "I" which is not properly removed within 30 days following the session enrolled will become an "F" grade.

### ***How To Withdraw From a Course***

To be official, the class withdrawal must be in writing and signed by the student requesting the withdrawal; no withdrawal is accepted verbally. Please review the "Schedule of Classes" (online or in-print) for procedures for class changes or withdrawals and the refund policy and schedule.

### **COURSE DELIVERY METHODOLOGY:**

This course is offered as a distance-learning course through the Moodle Learning Platform. Amberton's distance learning courses, called e-Courses, are identical to classroom courses in terms of learning outcomes, competencies, and instructor expectations. A student choosing to take an e-Course must have the following skills and technical capabilities:

1. Access to the Internet
2. General knowledge in:
  - Internet browser settings and configuration
  - e-mail and file attachments
  - Uploading and downloading files
  - Using a word processing package
3. Ability to conduct on-line research

Students who have not mastered these skills should not enroll for this course but should consider enrolling in MIS2110 Computer Concepts and Internet Technologies for instruction in these areas.

### **HOW TO ACCESS YOUR COURSE:**

#### ***Through the Amberton University Student Portal***

Students enrolled in distance learning courses using the Moodle Learning Platform may access the course through the Amberton University Student Portal. The site may be accessed through the University's main page (<http://www.Amberton.edu>) or at <http://apps.Amberton.edu>. After selecting the "Student Portal" link, you will be prompted for a Username and Password.

Use your assigned **username and password** (AUID) as described below to enter the AU Student Portal:

**Username** = your capitalized firstname **initial**+lastname+last 3 digits of your SSN.

\* Use your name exactly as it is listed on the University's records, including any suffixes or hyphenations, such as Jr, Sr, or II, as a part of your username.

For example: James Jones, Jr. SSN: 123-45-6789

Username: JJonesJr789

**Password** = your Amberton University ID# (AUID) **including the dashes**

For example: 04-999-999

Once your login has been validated, you may select from a variety of menu options, including your individual E-Course, email account, Remote Research, General Tools, all Syllabi and Research Tutorials.

If you are accessing the Student Portal from a public or shared computer, close the browser completely when finished, or click on the Logout button. For security purposes, no other person should have access to your Username or Password. If you feel your information has been compromised or if you experience technical difficulties, contact the e-course system administrator at: [e-sysop@amberton.edu](mailto:e-sysop@amberton.edu)

If you have lost or do not know your Amberton ID#, please contact the Student Services Office 972/279-6511 or [advisor@Amberton.edu](mailto:advisor@Amberton.edu) for a replacement AUID card. You must know your Amberton ID# to gain access to the course and to send an email to your professor.

### **Through the Amberton University Moodle Website**

Students enrolled in distance learning courses using the Moodle Learning Platform may also access the course by going to: <http://moodle.Amberton.edu>

For those utilizing Moodle for the first time, the **username and password** for the Moodle Learning Platform will be emailed to the student's University email account prior to the start of the course. For those returning to Moodle who do not remember their username and password, click on the link "*Forgotten your username or password*" available on the Moodle log in page (<http://moodle.Amberton.edu>). Otherwise use the same username and password as previous session.

### **Moodle Tutorial:**

Upon successful log in and access to the Moodle learning platform, there is a *Student Moodle Tutorials* course available, to learn about the basics of Moodle. Simply click on the link for the *Student Moodle Tutorials* and read through the various learning topics: Navigating; Communicating; Assignments & Exams; Grades; and Student Resources.

### **COURSE COMMUNICATIONS:**

Students will communicate with faculty through the Moodle Learning Platform or the Amberton University email system.

### **Email Communication**

Each student enrolled is assigned an Amberton email account, which gives the student access to the Amberton email system ([my.Amberton.edu](mailto:my.Amberton.edu)). This email account is provided by Google Apps for Education. Students are encouraged to check their email regularly for University news, notices, and to communicate with instructors.

The student's assigned email address would be [Username@my.Amberton.edu](mailto:Username@my.Amberton.edu)

Example: [LJones-Smith789@my.Amberton.edu](mailto:LJones-Smith789@my.Amberton.edu)

The student Username is determined by:

firstname initial+lastname+last 3 digits of student ssn.

For example: Linda Jones-Smith      SSN: 123-45-6789

Email Address = [LJones-Smith789@my.Amberton.edu](mailto:LJones-Smith789@my.Amberton.edu)

Students will be prompted for a Username and Password when accessing their email account. Use the Username portion of the email address as the username (Example: [LJones-Smith789](mailto:LJones-Smith789@my.Amberton.edu)) and your Amberton ID# (including the dashes) as the password.

If you already have a Google Gmail account, you might be prompted to add this account to your current account. Click 'Yes' and you will be logged into your [my.Amberton.edu](mailto:my.Amberton.edu) email account. It will be a separate email account from your personal Gmail account.

If you need assistance with your email account, please visit <https://support.google.com/mail>

**Students are responsible for reviewing the "Communication Guidelines" provided on the individual E-Course for specific instructor requirements.**



Upon completion of a session, all communication and course specific information is removed from the Moodle system. If a student needs to maintain a record of communications or assignments, the student is strongly encouraged to print out or download these items to a disk for their own records.

### **FORMAT AND SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS:**

Assignments are to be submitted to the appropriate assignment Drop Box in the Moodle system. Specific directions and guidelines for submission of assignments are located on-line in the "Communication Guidelines" of the e-course. Due to compatibility issues, Office 2007 files cannot be read by earlier versions of Microsoft Office. Before submitting an exercise file, confirm the file is in the proper format for grading by the instructor.

### **INSTRUCTOR/COURSE EVALUATION:**

Each session, all Amberton students are provided with the opportunity to evaluate their courses and instructors. The evaluation process is an important one and provides students with an anonymous and confidential way to give meaningful feedback to the University. Summary information and comments are provided to faculty after the close of the session. All information provided is anonymous.

The Instructor/Course Evaluation will be open for completion during week 9 of the session. An evaluation assignment will be placed in week 9 of the Moodle course, along with the instructions on how to complete the evaluation. Prior to week 9, the University will send out an email containing instructions and dates for the evaluation period.

### **RESEARCH RESOURCES:**

The Library provides access to full-text, and peer reviewed articles, and digital research tools. Students can search Library holdings through the online catalog and databases search engines available on the Library website or browse the physical library space and holdings located at the Garland campus.

Research items not contained in the Amberton Library collection can be located through interlibrary Loan (ILL) or through the TexShare program with the help of the Library staff. Students with questions about available services, resources, or research, may contact the Library via email at [Library@amberton.edu](mailto:Library@amberton.edu).

### **RESEARCH ACCESS:**

Databases can only be accessed by authorized users, and students at Amberton must enter their Amberton ID credentials-same as Moodle login-to gain access when off-campus. Use an Amberton website, such as the University site ([Amberton.edu](http://Amberton.edu)) or the library site ([Library.amberton.edu](http://Library.amberton.edu)) to find links to databased and digital books. Online resources are available all day, every day.

### ***Library Live Chat Feature***

Library staff are available to assist students with research problems or questions during Library hours through a live online chat feature, telephone, email, "How-to" videos, or in person. The library telephone is (972-279-6511 ext. 185. You can email questions to [library@amberton.edu](mailto:library@amberton.edu) or visit the library in person on the Garland campus for assistance.

### ***Microsoft Office 365 Education:***

Amberton University students have access to a license for Office 365 Education, a comprehensive suite of productivity tools. This package includes:

- Microsoft Word for document creation
- Excel for spreadsheets and data analysis
- PowerPoint for presentations
- OneNote for digital note-taking
- Microsoft Teams for collaboration
- Additional classroom tools to enhance your learning experience

To set up your student account and access these resources, please follow the instructions provided in our step-by-step guide: [https://amberton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Office365\\_Setup\\_Students.pdf](https://amberton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Office365_Setup_Students.pdf)

### ***Google Workspace for Education:***

All students are assigned a Gmail account in Google Workspace for Education.



To set up your student account and access these resources, please follow the instructions provided in our step-by-step guide: [https://amberton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Google\\_Drive\\_Students.pdf](https://amberton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Google_Drive_Students.pdf)

Once logged into your student account, you'll have access to a suite of tools designed to enhance your learning experience:

- Google Docs: Create and edit essays, reports, and other written assignments
- Google Slides: Develop engaging presentations for projects and class discussions
- Google Sheets: Perform data analysis, create charts, and manage calculations
- Google Drive: Store, organize, and easily access all your files in the cloud
- Google Calendar: Schedule study sessions, track assignment deadlines, and manage your academic timetable
- Google Keep: Take and organize quick notes during lectures or study sessions
- Google Meet: Attend virtual classes, participate in group study sessions, or meet with teachers
- Google Classroom: Access course materials, submit assignments, and receive feedback from instructors
- Google Forms: Create surveys for research projects or participate in class quizzes
- Google Sites: Build websites or digital portfolios to showcase your work