

AMBERTON UNIVERSITY
e-COURSE SYLLABUS

COM4441.E1 Effective Writing Skills
Fall 2026

PROFESSOR INFORMATION:

Professor: Dr. Jim Richey
Amberton Extension: 972-279-6511 ext. 210
Amberton Email: **JRichey@amberton.edu**

COURSE INFORMATION:

COM4441.E1 Effective Writing Skills
Level: Undergraduate
Beginning Date of Session: Saturday, September 12
Ending Date of Session: Thursday, November 19

Student access available to the Student Portal: Saturday, September 12.

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

PREREQUISITES:

None

TEXTBOOK(S) AND REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Title: Successful College Writing
Author: Kathleen T. McWhorter
Publisher: Macmillan
Year Published: 2025
Edition: 9th
ISBN: 10: or 13: 9781319414207 or 9781319562991
Price: Available at <http://amberton.ecampus.com>

Students should verify enrollment in course before purchasing textbooks. Textbook information and ordering options are available through the Amberton Virtual Bookstore. 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.

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

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.

STUDENTS' 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 textbook	Discussion Board Post AND Goals Essay	1, 2, 3,10	9/21/26
2	Description	Descriptive Essay	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	9/28/26
3	Process Analysis	Discussion post	1, 4, 9, 14	10/5/26
4	Process Analysis	Process Essay (TEST)	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	10/12/26
5	Comparison and Contrast	Comparison and Contrast assignment	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	10/19/26
6	Cause and Effect	Cause and Effect assignment	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14	10/26/26
7	Argumentation and Persuasion	Discussion post	1, 4, 15, 16, 17	11/2/26

8	Argumentation and Persuasion	Peer Review	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	11/9/26
9	Argumentation and Persuasion	Argumentative Research Paper (TEST/Final Exam)	1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	11/16/26

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:

Students should review instructor feedback provided through Moodle or Amberton CampusWeb Portal. Final grades are processed approximately one week after the session and may be viewed through the student portal. Grades will not be released by phone or through unsecured channels. 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 granted only at the professor's discretion for emergencies or illness.

Students have 30 days from the end of the session to complete the course requirements. If the conditions are not met within this 30-day window, the "I" automatically converts to an "F".

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 delivered through Moodle. Students are expected to have reliable internet access, basic computer skills, the ability to upload/download files, use Amberton email, and submit assignments in the required format. Students needing assistance should use the Amberton SSO support/ticket process.

HOW TO ACCESS YOUR COURSE:

SINGLE SIGN-ON (SSO) INSTRUCTIONS FOR AMBERTON UNIVERSITY:

Students should access Amberton systems through the Single Sign-On portal at <https://sso.amberton.edu>. After logging in, students can access Moodle, Amberton email, CampusWeb, and other assigned applications. Students who need help accessing SSO should submit a support request through the SSO support option or contact support@amberton.edu.

MOODLE TUTORIAL:

Upon successful log in and access to the Moodle learning platform, there is a Student Moodle Tutorial course available, to learn about the basics of Moodle. Simply click on the link for the Student Moodle Tutorial 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:

Students are expected to use their Amberton email account and Moodle for course communications. Students must use their official university email account for all university related communication and should check their Amberton emails regularly for course and university notices.

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 must be submitted through the appropriate Moodle assignment link unless otherwise directed by the instructor. Students are responsible for submitting files in the format required by the instructor.

INSTRUCTOR/COURSE EVALUATION:

Students will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous course and instructor evaluation near the end of the session. Instructions and dates will be provided through Moodle and/or Amberton email.

RESEARCH RESOURCES:

The Amberton Library provides access to full-text articles, peer-reviewed databases, and research tools, with options like Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and TexShare for items outside its collection. For research assistance, students can connect with library staff during operating hours via email (library@amberton.edu), phone (972-279-6511 ext. 185), "How-to" videos, live online chat, or in person at the Garland campus. The online library is available through Single Sign On (SSO).

MICROSOFT OFFICE 365 EDUCATION:

Amberton University students may access Microsoft 365 Education resources as provided by the university.

GOOGLE WORKSPACE FOR EDUCATION:

Amberton students are assigned a Google Workspace for Education account, including Amberton Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, Sheets, and Slides. Students should use their Amberton Google account for course-related work when required.