

Houston Graduate School of Theology

RE 400 English Writing Lab

Fall 2019, Wednesday, 4:30-5:30 pm and online

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Houston Graduate School of Theology equips women and men to be ministers and messengers of God's mission of reconciliation through academic excellence, personal transformation, and leadership development

I. Course Description

RE 400 is taught to ensure a basic understanding of the English language and its rules and regulations for writing professionally coherent papers and to raise the level of English proficiency skills. Particular emphasis is given to the development of fundamentals of grammar, sentence structure, punctuation and capitalization.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will retake and pass the English Proficiency Exam (EPE).

Students will successfully organize their thoughts in sentence form and demonstrate a growing understanding of college-level writing skills. The course expands into organizing sentences into paragraph structure. The final stage is organizing thought into written essay form. The student is taught to view the essay as a collection of paragraphs, with each paragraph being a collection of sentences that come together to illustrate a point.

III. Course Requirements

- A. Read all assignments.
- B. Weekly attendance/online response
- C. Participation in all discussion of class-related topics.
- D. Submit homework/respond by email or online at assigned blog.
- E. Retake and pass EPE, if required.

IV. Course Grading Scale

The following grading system will be used for this class: Pass/Fail.

- Satisfactory work and pass the EPE: Pass
- Unsatisfactory work and/or failure to pass the EPE: Fail

V. HGST Policies

- A. Regular attendance and regular submission of assignments on due dates in the syllabus is expected. Each student must talk to the instructor about circumstances affecting his or her ability to attend class and complete assignments. A "T" will be noted in the attendance roster for students who develop a pattern (3 times) of missing up to half of a class session by either tardiness or early departure. Three "tardies," as described above, will equal one absence. More than three absences (excused or unexcused) may result in failure of the course.
- B. Work is expected on the due date.

C. Electronic Equipment Usage in Classrooms

It is expected that students will use technology (cell phones, laptop computers, iPads, etc.) during classes only for the purposes of class work. Therefore, students should turn off cell phones and refrain from texting and using laptop computers during classes except for the purposes of taking notes or doing research specifically authorized by the course instructor. Students who have emergency needs not covered by this policy must ask for an exception from the course instructor.

D. *Please review the Academic Catalog for requirements regarding Incompletes and Plagiarism issues. For more information on Library Services, please download the Library Handbook from the HGST website.*

VI. Required Textbooks and Materials

MDiv, MACM, or MTS students:

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2018.

VII. Bibliography

Boyles, Nancy. *Closer Reading Grades 3-6*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin. 2014.

Lester, Mark, and Larry Beason. *English Grammar and Usage*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2013.

Schick, Theodore, Jr., and Lewis Vaughn. *How to Think about Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age*, 5th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008. 9780073386621.

Straus, Jane. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*, 10th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Yaghjian, Lucretia B. *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. New York: Continuum, 2006. 978-0826418852.

VIII. Follow these Guidelines for Writing Assignments

- **Margins:** one inch on all four sides.
- **Font:** 12-point Times New Roman font throughout.
- **Presentation:** do not use presentation binders or folders; use staples only on your papers.
- **Sentence Construction:** Avoid passive voice construction (i.e. The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.
- **References to Oneself:** Avoid 1st or 2nd person references (I, you, we).
- **Subject/Verb Agreement:** Be sure that number and tense agree.
- **Contractions:** Do not use contractions. (use **it is** rather than **it’s**)
- **Spellcheck!**
- **Sentence fragments:** Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a verb.

IX. Course Outline and Calendar

Selected readings should be completed prior to class meeting.

Week	Topics	Reading Assignments	Notes*
1	1) Introduction to course.	Bring Turabian book to class.	Discuss online and classroom processes.
2	2) Nouns, subject and verb agreement. Taking notes for writing projects. Introduction to Close Reading. Homework: Essay.	Read assignment 1: Turabian, pages 42-49 and 66-74. Close Reading handout.	Discuss grammar and punctuation and taking notes systematically.
3	3) Verbs: to be and conditional. Hidden features of words. Active and passive sentences. Homework: verb worksheet	Read assignment 2: Turabian: Chapter 11.	Turn in homework #1
4	4) Possession; the letter "s." Subject follows verb. Singular, Plural. Punctuation, chapter 21. Homework: verb-subject worksheet	Read assignment 3. Turabian: Chapter 21	Turn in homework #2
5	5) Adjectives and adverbs. Homework: chapter 7	Read assignment 4.	Turn in homework #3
6	6) Paragraph Construction. Drafting your Report. Homework: writing worksheet	Read assignment 5. Turabian: Chapter 7	Turn in homework #4
7	7) Grammar & Punctuation review. Writing numbers.	Read assignment 6.	Turn in homework #5
	Essay Construction. Christian Spirituality and The Rule of Life	Read assignment 7.	Turn in homework #6
8	Review grammar and punctuation	Q & A Session, Review	
	Take English Proficiency Exam, if required.		