

# Workshop in Written Expression

21G.219/220

Spring 2018  
MW 12:30 - 2:00

Room 1-135

Office hours: M, T 2:15-3:15 and by appointment

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*“Writing is thinking on paper. Anyone who thinks clearly should be able to write clearly—about any subject at all.”*

—William Zinsser

## Course Description

This course is designed to improve your grammatical accuracy at the sentence level while teaching you strategies for writing clearly and concisely some of the forms you will need to write in your MIT career and beyond. We will focus on mastering clear sentences and paragraphs by increasing grammatical accuracy and improving organization. Attention will also be given to audience, punctuation, and making better vocabulary choices.

Through regular writing practice in and outside of class, students will learn to express themselves clearly when defining terms, presenting problems and solutions, explaining processes, and giving commentary on data. Equally importantly, students will learn to revise their own work (“self-edit”) through incorporating corrections and suggestions from peers and the instructor.

## Required Materials:

- Course Reader for 21G.219/220: Available at Copy Tech (basement of Building 11), probably after Tuesday, February 13; I will let you know.
- Handouts folder or 3-ring binder. In addition to materials in the course reader, handouts will be distributed in class and posted on the Learning Module (LM). You should keep all hard copies in this folder and bring them to every class, as they will often be reused.
- A separate portfolio with pockets in which you will keep and turn in all your major writing assignments, including corrected drafts. You will turn in the entire portfolio with each major writing task so that I may observe your progress. Please make sure your name is visible on the outside of the portfolio!

Please bring your **Course Reader and handouts folder/binder** to every class. For some classes I will ask you also to bring a laptop computer or tablet (not just a phone); these days will be indicated “BC” in the homework column for that day.

## Attendance, Punctuality, Preparation, and Participation

- Plan to attend every class. **Missing more than two classes will affect your grade, as will a pattern of lateness.** If you know now that you will have a conflict that will prevent you from attending all the classes or require that you come late, you should wait and take the class another semester.

- Come to class prepared, having done the homework. Lack of preparation will affect your grade.
- Plan to participate actively. This includes contributing comments in full class discussions, being active in pair and small-group discussions, giving thoughtful and constructive criticism in peer reviews, and asking questions. Lack of cooperation will affect your grade.

### Homework

- **Late assignments and papers will not be accepted unless you have obtained prior approval from the instructor.** If you need an extension, you must make arrangements with me personally at least 24 hours before the due date. Again, if you do not think you will have enough time to complete all the assignments, please wait until a semester when which you will. Please be aware that **simply notifying me ahead of time does not guarantee an extension.** Assignments are listed in the schedule at the end of this syllabus; unless otherwise instructed, the assignments can be found in the course reader or on the Learning Module (LM): <http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/21G/sp18/21G.219-220/>.
- **Missing class is not an excuse for missing an assignment.** If you must miss a class, find out from another student what you missed and whether the assignments have changed from what's on the syllabus. (Exchange email addresses with one or two people in the class for such situations.) I expect you to be prepared and hand in the homework for the next class. If you must be absent on a day on which written homework is due, either ask a classmate to hand it in for you or send it to me by email. **If it is one of the major writing assignments, do not email it; ask a classmate to hand in your portfolio for you.**

### Types of Assignments:

Work in this class will include

- short homework assignments, in the course reader and distributed in class/on LM, including memos, grammar and vocabulary practice, editing, and other short writing assignments;
- Syllabus, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary quizzes;
- **Five major writing assignments**, including:
  - Four 1- to 1½-page papers with three drafts of each:
    - **Extended Definition:** How can you accurately define a key term in your field and develop this definition to explain the term more fully to a non-expert reader?
    - **Process Description:** How can you explain the steps in a process so that your reader understands them clearly?
    - **Data Commentary:** How can you explain graphs and charts so that your reader understands both the information and its implications?
    - **Problem-Solution:** What is a current problem or issue in your field, and what research or project would you propose to solve it?
  - **Wikipedia** project: You will plan, research, and write a substantial contribution to Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia. How can you accurately summarize sources, choosing the most important and relevant details and reporting them without plagiarizing?
  - **Revision:** Learning to revise your work carefully and objectively is where your real improvement in writing will occur. Thus, each major writing assignment will be revised twice, once according to your classmates' feedback and once according to mine. Your final grade on each will depend on not only on the quality of the final draft but also the incorporation of the suggestions of others.

**Format**

See “Guidelines for Typed Assignments” at the beginning of the Course Reader. **Papers not meeting these criteria will be marked down.** All papers must be submitted in class unless otherwise instructed and must be submitted in your portfolio with all previous drafts of all previous papers so that I may gauge your progress accurately.

**Follow Instructions**

Read the instructions for each assignment carefully and ask for clarification if you are not sure what you should do. To get full credit for an assignment, you must follow the instructions, including page length. Turning in a paper that does not match the assignment will result in a lower grade.

**Grading**

Attendance, punctuality	10%
Participation and preparation of homework assignments (including vocabulary)	12.5%
4 grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary quizzes	5%
Wikipedia project (breakdown to follow)	12.5%
Extended Definition: 1% freewrite, 1% outline, 1% peer review draft, 1% peer review, 3% best draft to instructor (+memo of changes); 8% final draft (+memo of changes)	15%
Process Description: 1% peer review draft, 1% peer review, 4% best draft to instructor (+memo of changes); 9% final draft (+memo of changes)	15%
Data Commentary: same percentages as on Process Description	15%
Problem/Solution paper: same percentages as on Process Description	15%
<b>Total possible:</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Grading 1** scale for formal papers, Wikipedia project, and course:

97+ = A+	93 – 96 =A	90-92=A-	87-89=B+	83-86=B	80-82=B-
77-79=C+	73-76=C	70-72=C-	60-69=D	Below 60 = F	

**Grading 2:** Other homework assignments:

☑+	100%	Assignment met all or most of the requirements.
☑	85%	Assignment met many of the requirements.
☑-	70%	Assignment met some of the requirements.
<b>X</b>	0	Work did not match the assignment, was late without permission, or was not turned in.

**Plagiarism/Outside Help**

At MIT, you are expected to do your own work. While borrowing ideas and words from others is acceptable in some cultures, it is not in the United States, **and the penalty for plagiarizing others’ work is severe.** A plagiarized paper may not receive credit, and repeated plagiarism may result in a **failing grade for the semester or worse.** Here are some basic rules you should follow to avoid plagiarism:

- Do not copy and paste from the Internet or copy from another student’s work or from a journal, book, or other paper source. Summarize and paraphrase!
- Do not submit papers or parts of papers you have written previously;

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- Do not have anyone correct or edit your work or suggest changes. If you feel that you need extra help, please visit my office hours and use the Writing Center (see below);
- Make sure to keep a copy, either electronic or paper, of all the sources you use to write a paper and submit copies of those sources with your paper;
- If you're not sure whether you are plagiarizing or not, ask me or someone at the Writing Center *before* turning in your paper.

### The Writing Center

The **WCC** (Writing and Communication Center) at MIT offers *free* one-on-one **professional** advice from communication experts (MIT lecturers who all have advanced degrees and who are all published writers). The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic, creative, job-related, and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing your presentations & designing slides). The WCC also helps with all **English as Second Language** issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice, from understanding genre conventions to analyzing what particular journals require. The WCC is located at [E18, Room 233](#), 50 Ames Street. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. (Be sure to join the wait list if you cannot get an appointment the day you want one.) The WCC also offers many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations on their website. The Center's core hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; evening hours vary. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours.

### Courtesy

No cell phone/electronic device use in class unless specified by instructor or for looking up words in a dictionary. Devices used for checking Facebook, WeChat, Instagram, Snapchat, or the like during class may be confiscated by the instructor and, if they are nicer than his, kept. Also, while the instructor always appreciates "friend" requests, they cannot be accepted while you are his student.

## 21G.219/220 Course Calendar (Spring 2018)

1. All readings and assignments are in the Course Reader unless otherwise noted. Assignments from other sources will be distributed in class and posted on the LM. For all Wikipedia assignments (except the first, which will be on the LM), see the [Wikipedia class website](#) (after you create an account and join the class).
2. Readings and assignments are to be discussed on the days listed, so have them read and done **before** class on those days.
3. **This calendar is tentative and subject to change**; revisions to this calendar will be announced in class and posted on the LM. Be sure to check the LM if you are absent, as homework may change.

Wk	#	Day	Date	Class topics	Reading & homework due <u>before</u> class
1	1	W	Feb 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introductions</li><li>• Syllabus/overview</li><li>• Discussion: strengths/weaknesses</li><li>• Writing sample</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• N/A</li></ul>

Wk	#	Day	Date	Class topics	Reading & homework due <u>before</u> class
2	2	M	Feb 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning vocabulary</li> <li>Grammar review: Word forms</li> <li>Grammar review: Verb tenses I</li> <li>Resume/CV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read “Clear Writing”</li> <li>Do “Writing in Your Field” assignment</li> </ul>
	3	W	Feb 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus quiz</li> <li>Verb tenses II</li> <li>Paragraphs and topic sentences</li> <li>Cohesion/Flow: Choppiness, coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review syllabus for quiz</li> <li>Resume/CV assignment</li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Feb 19 PRESIDENT'S DAY -- WE MEET <u>TUESDAY</u></b>					
3	4	T	Feb 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to read and write</li> <li>Sentence combination: subordination</li> <li>Cohesion/flow II—key noun, transitions, <i>this/these</i> + summary word</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read “Writing emails,” do assignment</li> <li>Read Guidelines for Typed Assignments</li> <li>Verb tense sentences (paper, typed)</li> <li>Vocabulary List #1 (upload on LM)</li> <li>Bring “expert” article from “Writing in Your Field” assignment</li> </ul>
	5	W	Feb 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Style</li> <li>Adjective clauses</li> <li>Defining terms, extending definitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website <a href="http://writingprocess.mit.edu">http://writingprocess.mit.edu</a>—Read all “Background” sections</li> <li>Read Sample Student Extended Definition #1, answer Q’s (in reader)</li> </ul>
4	6	M	Feb 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss EDs</li> <li>ED Paper assignment, options</li> <li>The Writing Process, step 1</li> <li>Freewriting (email to me by 6:00 pm)</li> <li>Step 2: Detailed outline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Extended Definitions 2 &amp; 3, answer questions to turn in.</li> <li>writingprocess.mit.edu: Steps 1, 2 (read, don’t do tasks yet)</li> <li>Vocabulary List #2</li> <li>Bring computer/tablet (BC)</li> </ul>
	7	W	Feb 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singulars/plurals in general statements</li> <li>Plagiarism, Summarizing, and Paraphrasing I</li> <li>Online vocabulary resources</li> <li>Writing Process: Step 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Detailed Outline of Ex. Definition</b> (submit on Stellar)</li> <li>Post one word (all five parts) from your Vocab List #1 or #2 in Shared Vocabulary List #1 on Wiki on LM for quiz #1</li> <li>BC</li> </ul>
		Sat.	Mar 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Upload peer review draft (as good as you can get it) of Extended Definition to the LM by Sat., 6:00 p.m.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Then watch peer review video, see Groups, download your two partners’ papers, and pre-peer review for Monday according to instructions.</i></li> </ul>
5	8	M	Mar 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quiz #1</b></li> <li>Peer review Extended Definition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>pre-peer review</b>; bring peer reviews and <b>one clean copy of your own paper</b> to class</li> <li>Vocabulary List #3</li> </ul>
	9	W	Mar 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing Process: Revision, Editing strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writingprocess.mit.edu Steps 4, 5</li> </ul>

Wk	#	Day	Date	Class topics	Reading & homework due <u>before class</u>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conclusions</li> <li>Wikipedia impressions/concerns</li> <li>Conciseness and clarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wikipedia: Create account, join class</li> <li>On class Wikipedia site, do "Practicing the Basics" and "Introduction to the Wikipedia Project" (do trainings, readings specified there).</li> </ul>
6	10	M	Mar 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conciseness, cont'd</li> <li>Begin Process Descriptions</li> <li>Verbs: Active and passive voice</li> <li>Wikipedia: "Critique an article"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Revised Extended Definition with earlier drafts, comments</b></li> <li>Wikipedia: "Evaluating Articles and Sources" training in "Critique an Article" assignment;</li> <li>BC</li> </ul>
	11	W	Mar 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Process Descriptions</li> <li>Verbs: Transitive/intransitive</li> <li>Cause/Effect structures</li> <li>Participial adjectives/linking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample Process Description #2, Q's</li> <li>Finish Wikipedia: Critique an article</li> </ul>
7	12	M	Mar 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articles I (Count/Non-count nouns)</li> <li>Wikipedia: Content gaps; Thinking about sources/plagiarism</li> <li>Wikipedia project assignment</li> <li>Finding sources for Wikipedia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final Extended Definition</b></li> <li>Sample Student Process Descriptions 3 &amp; 4, answer questions</li> <li>Vocabulary List #4</li> <li>BC</li> </ul>
	13	W	Mar 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PD paper assignment, planning</li> <li>Articles II</li> <li>Wikipedia: Find possible topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process Desc.: Sentence combination</li> <li>Wikipedia: Read "Finding possible topics"</li> <li>BC</li> </ul>
8	Mar 26 Mar 28			<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
		Sat	Mar 31	<i>Upload peer review draft (as good as you can get it) of Process descriptions to the LM by Sat., 6:00 p.m.</i>	<i>Then see Groups, download your two partners' papers, and pre-peer review for Monday according to instructions.</i>
9	14	M	Apr 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Peer Review Process Desc.'s</b></li> <li>Parallelism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-peer reviews; bring to class <b>with one clean copy of your own paper</b></li> <li>Midterm evaluations</li> </ul>
	15	W	Apr 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin Data Commentary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>purpose, sample;</li> <li>Structure,</li> <li>highlighting line graphs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Revised Process Description</b></li> <li>Wikipedia: In your Sandbox, rank two potential articles with sources and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each</li> </ul>
10	16	M	Apr 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>peer review Wikipedia ideas</li> <li>DC: highlighting bar graphs</li> <li>DC: Making defensible claims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read student sample Data Commentaries #1, #2, answer q's</li> <li>Vocabulary #5; also post a word from your personal lists 3 or 4 in Shared Vocabulary List #2 (Wiki on the LM)</li> </ul>
	17	W	Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making defensible claims, cont'd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample student DC #3 &amp; 4, answer</li> </ul>

Wk	#	Day	Date	Class topics	Reading & homework due <u>before</u> class
			11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DC Paper assignment</li> <li>Paraphrasing, Summarizing II</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Q's</li> <li>revise Wikipedia proposals in Sandbox</li> </ul>
11	18	M	Apr 16	<b>PATRIOTS DAY</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
	19	W	Apr 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quiz #2</b></li> <li>DC paper planning</li> <li>Punctuation workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice: Interpreting Data (p. )</li> <li>Study for quiz</li> <li>Bring 2 unrelated data sets to class: line or bar graphs on a change in your country (population, birth rate, etc.) or on an area in your field that is <i>not too technical</i>. Make sure each has at least 3 separate points or trends that you can highlight and interpret.</li> <li><b>Wikipedia: "Begin Drafting Your Article/Addition"</b>: Write the text in your Sandbox from your first source and cite correctly</li> </ul>
		Sat	Apr 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Upload peer review draft of Data Comm. to LM by Sat., 6:00 p.m.</i></li> </ul>	<i>See new Groups, download your partners' papers, and pre-peer review for Monday.</i>
12	20	M	Apr 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Peer review DC's</b></li> <li>Wikipedia: continue drafting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring peer reviews to class + clean copy of your own paper</li> </ul>
	21	W	Apr 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem-Solution structure</li> <li>Proposing solutions</li> <li>How are Wikipedia articles coming?</li> <li>Mid-position adverbs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Last day to drop</b></li> <li><b>Revised Data Commentary</b></li> <li>Wikipedia: Have incorporated second source with citation (still in your Sandbox)</li> </ul>
13	22	M	Apr 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss PS's</li> <li>Will/would/can/could confusion</li> <li>Article practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample Student Problem-Solution #1, #2, Qs</li> <li><b>Wikipedia: Completed draft (in your sandbox/workspace)</b></li> <li>Vocabulary #6</li> </ul>
	23	W	May 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorm problem-solution topics</li> <li>Wikipedia: Discuss peer reviews</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample Student Prob-Sol's #3, questions</li> <li>Wikipedia: "Peer review" two others' articles</li> </ul>
		Sat	May 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Upload peer review draft of Prob/Sol to LM by Sat., 6:00 p.m.</i></li> </ul>	<i>Then see new Groups, download your partners' papers, and pre-peer review for Monday.</i>
14	24	M	May 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer review P-S</li> <li>Muddy Cards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring peer reviews to class + clean copy of your own paper</li> <li>Vocabulary #7</li> </ul>
		W	May 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar and vocabulary review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final Data Commentary</b></li> <li><b>Revised P-S paper to instructor</b></li> </ul>

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Wk	#	Day	Date	Class topics	Reading & homework due <u>before</u> class
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocab: Post one word from your lists 5, 6, or 7 in Shared List #3</li> </ul>
15	25	M	May 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quiz #3</b> (cumulative)</li> <li>Make final edits, do final Wikipedia checklist (every group member); Polish; LAUNCH!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study for cumulative quiz</li> <li>Implement Wikipedia revisions based on peer reviews; revise &amp; edit</li> <li>BC</li> </ul>
	26	W	May 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class evaluations</li> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final drafts of Problem-Solution (2 copies + all drafts + previous papers)</b></li> <li>BC</li> </ul>