Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

**11.229—Advanced Writing Seminar**

**Spring, 2000**  
**F, 1:00–3:00**  
**Room 10-401**

James C. Morrison, M. P. A., Lecturer

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Office hours: W, 2:30–4:00 and by appointment

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**Course Description**

This seminar provides the opportunity for students to work intensively on developing the research claims and arguments in their writing. Both master's and PhD students are welcome, and the subject is designed to maximize cross-fertilization between programs and research areas. Students come to the subject with a writing project already in hand—thesis, dissertation, proposal, journal article, or the like—and engage in collaborative feedback and peer review under the guidance of the instructor. The first half of the semester is devoted to reading and writing assignments that guide students in focusing on the connections between their research claims, the evidence that supports those claims, and the reasoning that underlies that support. In the latter half, students provide drafts of their project for further individual and group commentary and guidance in revision.

**Collaborative Learning**

A strong component of this course is the practice of collaborative learning—taking advantage of the resources students can offer one another in both class discussion and peer review. All preparatory assignments and preliminary drafts will be shared with the other members of the seminar, in advance of the class, for review, response, suggestions for revision, and peer editing. Each member of the class will have primary responsibility for reading and commenting on, in detail, another classmate’s assignment, in addition to reading and giving constructive feedback on the assignments and drafts of all other class members. I will, of course, provide feedback aimed at improvement, but this will be supplemented by a wider “audience” with whom the process of exchanging views will be an additional learning experience for all parties. Giving and getting constructive feedback
can be perhaps the most useful tool for learning to analyze and improve the quality of
one’s own writing and analysis.

Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted to the course’s e-mail distribution list, <11.229-all>,
at least 48 hours before the class meeting (that is, by Wednesday). If possible, students
should send assignments as Word attachments so as to preserve formatting. Be sure to
include your name, the subject number, the name of the assignment, and the date in a
block at the top left, and provide a complete and clearly informative title. The final draft
of the term paper should be submitted on paper in accordance with the standards for
formatting, style, and documentation presented in the Turabian *Manual* listed below.

Evaluation Criteria

Papers will be evaluated on the presence of a clearly defined and presented thesis and a
well-organized structure of support. All papers will be expected to include the persuasive
and coherent presentation of concrete evidence; integral and well-developed paragraphs
with clear topic sentences; smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs; concise,
grammatically constructed sentences; use of concrete nouns and active verbs; idiomatic
expression and precise word choice; appropriate use of verbal constructions, articles,
adjectives, and adverbs; and correct punctuation, mechanics, and spelling.

Schedule of Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Proportion of Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) February 11—Research puzzle and story (500 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) February 18—Research prospectus (500 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>(3) February 25—Research claim with supporting reasons (500 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>(4) March 3—Warrant and backing (500 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>(5) March 10—Rebuttal of objections and qualifications (500 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>(7) March 17—The whole argument (1000 words)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>(8) May 12—Final draft</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Throughout—attendance, class participation, and peer review</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Texts


Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace.* Chicago: University of Chicago

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* 6th
Schedule

February 4 Introduction to the course

11 Reading:
  Booth, Preface; Part I—Research, Researchers, and Readers
  Prologue: Starting a Research Project
  Chapter 1—Thinking in Print: The Uses of Research, Public and Private
  Chapter 2—Connecting with Your Reader: (Re)Creating Your Self and Your Audience
  Williams, Preface
  Chapter 1—Causes
  Chapter 10—Usage

Writing:
  Research puzzle and story

18 Reading:
  Booth, Part II—Asking Questions, Finding Answers
  Prologue: Planning Your Project
  Chapter 3—From Topics to Questions
  Chapter 4—From Questions to Problems

Writing:
  Research prospectus

25 Reading:
  Booth, Part III—Making a Claim and Supporting It
  Prologue: Arguments, Drafting, and Conversations
  Chapter 7—Making Good Arguments: An Overview
  Chapter 8—Claims and Evidence

Writing:
  Research claim with supporting reasons

March 3 Reading:
  Booth, Chapter 9—Warrants

Writing:
  Warrant and backing

10 Reading:
  Booth, Chapter 10—Qualifications
  Williams, Chapter 2—Clarity

Writing:
  Rebuttal of objections and qualifications
17 Reading:
  Booth, Part Four—Preparing to Draft, Drafting, and Revising
  Prologue: Planning Again
  Chapter 11—Pre-Drafting and Drafting
  Williams, Chapter 3—Cohesion
Writing:
  **The whole argument**

31 Reading:
  Williams, Chapter 4—Emphasis
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

April 7 Reading:
  Williams, Chapter 5—Coherence I
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

14 Reading:
  Booth, Chapter 12—Communicating Evidence Visually
  Williams, Chapter 6—Coherence II
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

21 Reading:
  Booth, Chapter 13—Revising Your Organization and Argument
  Williams, Chapter 7—Concision
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

28 Reading:
  Booth, Chapter 15—Introductions
  Williams, Chapter 8—Length
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

May 5 Reading:
  Booth, Part V—Some Last Considerations
  Research and Ethics
  Williams, Chapter 9—Elegance
Writing:
  **Partial drafts**

10 **Final draft due**