

## WRITING SKILLS

**Bachelor in Philosophy, Politics, Law and Economics PPLE  
SEP-2023 WS-PP.1.S.A**

Area Humanities

Number of sessions: 15

Academic year: 23-24

Degree course: FIRST

Number of credits: 3.0

Semester: 1<sup>o</sup>

Category: COMPULSORY

Language: English

Professor: **ANDRÉS PORRAS CHAVES**

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Born and raised in Madrid, Dr. Andrés Porras Chaves pursued his graduate education in Literature and Cultural Studies in the United States. He completed his MA at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and his PhD at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research focuses on contemporary literature and film with a postcolonial and transatlantic approach. Dr. Porras Chaves's most recent publications deal with issues of empire, memory, and identity in the Spanish-speaking world.

After multiple years teaching at American universities, Dr. Porras Chaves joined IE in 2022 as a faculty member at the Arts & Humanities Division, where he teaches a variety of courses on research methodologies, academic writing, languages, and cultural studies.

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### SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help students make the transition from the writing they were doing before college to the writing that will be expected of them in professional settings. The subject relies on three interlocking abilities: critical thinking, effective research, and professional writing. The students will learn how to think critically in a written context, developing research skills to structure evidence and data.

The goal of this course is to acquire communication skills through critical thinking and analytical writing: engaging with important social, political, and ethical questions; developing ideas and structuring arguments; reading closely, analyzing evidence, and questioning sources; and communicating those ideas in a clear, effective way.

During the following weeks, students will become familiar with the various aspects of the writing process. These classes will guide them in the preparation of professional texts, reports, and essays across all subjects on their degree. The course provides useful tools and resources while giving students the opportunity to work through many aspects related to the writing process, such as brainstorming and creativity, advanced argumentation and persuasion, fast reading, deconstruction of texts, learning styles, and effective note-taking.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Find information to develop, support and refute their topics more efficiently, identifying appropriate and relevant sources.
- Be able to use the IE library, Google Scholar, and other resources for effective research.
- Be able to recognize credible and non-credible sources that can be used in professional writing.
- Correctly and effectively incorporate ideas of others into their writing and avoid plagiarism by using correct citation methods (in-text citations, summarizing, paraphrasing, etc.).
- Correctly prepare formatted, organized references using the APA system.
- Be able to deconstruct and construct texts using critical thinking methodology.
- Quickly and effectively scan texts for key information.
- Employ effective argumentation when writing papers and identify errors in other writers' arguments.
- Identify and create structured essays (such as argumentative, expository, and compare/contrast), as well as other kinds of professional texts and written communication.
- Be able to write reports that are clear, concise, critical, and credible.
- Identify and produce a well-written thesis statement.
- Understand what different styles of writing are and develop them, knowing when to use and apply different registers.

## **TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

This is a practical course, adapted to the needs of each student, and supplemented with extra material and resources to permit each student to find their own path while acquiring fundamental academic skills common to all IE students. By combining 'learning by doing', 360° feedback, self-paced learning and study, group work, access to digital media, lectures, instructor feedback, and specialized workshops, this course places each student at the center of the entire learning process.

Through a common syllabus and evaluation criteria every student can feel confident that they are receiving the same essential academic skills as their peers. However, the methodology is also designed to be flexible and robust enough to permit students to write on subjects linked to their own degrees, go more in depth in areas where they feel they need to improve, explore in areas that catch their interest, learn at their own speed outside class through the use of videos and on-line materials, and sign up for workshops on specific subject areas that match their needs.

The professor is a facilitator who is there to guide and improve students' research skills, critical thinking, and academic & professional writing. For this reason, students are expected to come to class prepared to contribute with individual work as well as to work with peers (in pairs or small groups) and as a large group toward mastering the aforementioned concepts. The students will learn through peer review, instructor feedback (in class and on their homework assignments and essays), critical analysis of texts and group discussion. It is also expected that students will keep up to date with and use the resources to complement knowledge learned in class.

The extremely practical nature of this course is aimed at making students self-aware and self-sufficient in the areas of research, critical thinking, and academic and professional writing as these are abilities and skills that they will need in all of their other subjects and beyond.

<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</b>
Lectures	25.33 %	19.0 hours
Discussions	14.67 %	11.0 hours
Exercises in class, Asynchronous sessions, Field Work	14.67 %	11.0 hours
Group work	14.67 %	11.0 hours
Individual studying	30.67 %	23.0 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>75.0 hours</b>

## **NOTE**

The following program is tentative. Although we will cover all the listed topics, the selected readings and pace of the class will depend on group performance. Check your message board regularly for updates and announcements

## **PROGRAM**

### **SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Test of Proficiency in Written English**

This exam won't evaluate your English level; it will gauge your proficiency at writing in a professional environment. The questions will test your ability to communicate accurately and effectively in written English, elaborate a hypothesis, structure your ideas, evaluate external sources, identify logical gaps and inconsistencies, quote, paraphrase, summarize, and cite.

? In-class test

### **SESSION 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Introduction to the course**

Objectives, contents, schedule, and evaluation methods. Class dynamics. Digital resources and platforms that we will use this semester. Synchronous and asynchronous sessions. An overview of Blackboard.

? In-class activity: review last session's test

### **SESSION 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

## **Human writing and generative AIs**

From ChatGPT and DALL-E to Bard and Midjourney, text and image generators have exploded in the last months, reshaping the public sphere in unimaginable ways. These are some of the best-known examples of generative AI, a powerful new technology that combines machine-learning algorithms with billions of data points of human-created content. Today, we will explore how generative AIs write, compare what they do with human-written texts, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and reflect on how we should use them in college.

? Assigned reading

? In-class activity

## **SESSION 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Critical thinking, media literacy, and effective written communication**

What is critical thinking? What is effective written communication? How do we know what they are? Why are they useful? And why would I ever want to improve my writing skills when a computer can write for me? In this introductory session, we will discuss rhetoric and the power of communication, describe what an essay is, explore its various kinds (expository, argumentative, etc.), and analyze and compare the different types of writing (fiction, journalism, poetry, scripts, academic, business, commercial, social media, etc.). We will also try to find answers to the questions above and more.

? Assigned reading

? In-class activity

## **SESSION 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **The thesis statement and structure**

The thesis statement is the road map to your entire essay. It offers the summary of your main point, and the arguments you are presenting. The thesis statement is explained and developed in the course of the paper, helping the writer organize the essay, and letting the reader know what they are about to encounter. An academic essay, like many other pieces of writing, consists of an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion. Today, we will explore the basics of essay structure, how to create an outline, and the best ways to organize your information in a written narrative.

? Assigned reading

? In-class activity

## **SESSION 6 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **From brainstorming to research and organization**

The first step to any writing activity is brainstorming. This preliminary stage allows you to begin generating ideas, exploring them, and developing what will become the outline of your text. Today, we will explore some of the most successful rules and strategies for brainstorming. Then, we will discuss research and organization. Most kinds of professional writing need to be based on reliable sources. Academic writing even more so, as sources should, in almost all cases, be peer-reviewed. In this session, we will discuss the standards for academic writing, establish the distinction between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, and learn about the peer review process and the basics of citation. Finally, we will find out how to use the IE library, Google Scholar, and the Web of Science.

? Assigned reading

? In-class activity

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Deadline: **Essay 1**  
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## **SESSION 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Quantitative research**

Quantitative research collects numerical data through surveys, polls, and questionnaires, and analyzes it using statistical methods. Its aim is to produce objective, empirical data that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms to explain a particular phenomenon. Quantitative research is often used to test hypotheses, identify patterns, and make predictions. In this session, we will discuss these research methods, and analyze how they could be applied to our own work.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 8 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Qualitative research**

Qualitative methods provide a deep understanding of how people perceive their social realities and how they act within the social world. Among the different types of qualitative research methods, we can find diary accounts, in-depth interviews, analysis of documents, focus groups, case studies, and ethnographies. In today's session, we will review these research methods, and discuss how they could be applied to our own work.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **How to use evidence: Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing**

When arguing for or against something, your claims should always be backed up by evidence. Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing are three ways to incorporate this evidence into your own essay. Today, we will work on how to provide support for your claims, add credibility to your writing, give examples, and refer to the research that leads up to the work you are now doing.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 10 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Rhetoric and argumentation**

Logic and emotion are two tools we use to produce our arguments. They also enable us to evaluate other people's claims. In this session, we will see what an argument is and how to compose one according to the three rhetorical appeals (ethical, pathetic, and logical). We will also explore the basics of logic, the different types of reasoning, and work with a variety of logical fallacies.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **How to combine evidence and argumentation: the paragraph**

The paragraphs guide the reader through your text, clarifying, establishing, and supporting your thesis statement. Claim, evidence, and argumentation are the three components of an effective paragraph. In this class, we will learn to combine them, paying special attention to coherence and cohesion.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Introductions and conclusions**

As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Or a last one. The opening and closing paragraphs of any writing task provide a frame for your audience to understand what you mean. In our 21st session, we will take a look at introductions and conclusions, why they are important, what they should include, and how we could be successful at composing them.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Style**

Writing is a craft, not a special talent, and everybody can learn it with the right tools. Today, we will examine and test some of the most successful writing tools from different genres of storytelling: from fiction and poetry, to journalism, essays, and memoirs.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

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Deadline: **Essay 2**  
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## **SESSION 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **The peer review process**

The evaluation of your work by others with related competencies in your field is called peer review. Scholars and researchers rely on this process as a form of self-regulation, as it validates academic work, helps to improve the quality of the research, and connects people with similar interests. In this session, we will examine the numerous steps of the peer review process, discuss its usefulness, and connect it to citation practices.

- ? Assigned reading
- ? In-class activity

## **SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Final project workshop / presentation**

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Deadline: **Final project**  
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## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Grading criteria will be common for all students across all Research and Writing Skills groups. Independently of any variations in how a session is taught, all professors use common evaluation rubrics and criteria. There is also coordination across the interpretation and application of this evaluation. This is done with the students' interest in mind, ensuring objectivity and fairness across the subject.

Regardless of whether a student passes or not in the evaluation part of the course, more than 30% absences on the course is an automatic fail per IE policy.

Students will be evaluated as follows:

### **Preparation and participation in class discussions and activities (20%)**

- Attendance.
- Preparation of assigned readings.
- In-class participation.

### **Continuous Evaluation (20%)**

- Assignments completed and turned in on time.
- In-class exercises.
- Four short assignments.

### **Essay 1 (15%) - Deadline: before Session 7**

- 1,000-word essay using prompts provided by professors.
- This will put into practice key research skills learned in the first part of the course.
- Content (research, focus on ideas, incorporation of examples and ideas from bibliography, strength and logic of argumentation).
- Organization (organization of ideas, arguments, information and citations).
- Thesis statement (clearly defined and properly formatted).
- Introduction and conclusion (coherent and well-developed).
- Evidence and support (assertions are backed up with reliable sources).
- Language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, use of text markers).
- Correct bibliography and in-text citations.

### **Essay 2 (30%) - Deadline: before Session 14**

- 1,500-word essay using prompts provided by professors.
- This will put into practice key research skills learned in the first and second part of the course.
- Content (research, focus on ideas, incorporation of examples and ideas from bibliography, strength and logic of argumentation).
- Organization (organization of ideas, arguments, information and citations).
- Thesis statement (clearly defined and properly formatted).
- Introduction and conclusion (coherent and well-developed).
- Evidence and support (assertions are backed up with reliable sources).
- Language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, use of text markers).
- Correct bibliography and in-text citations.

### **Final Project (15%) - Deadline: end of semester**

- 1,000-word piece of professional, non-academic writing using persuasive language.
- Content (research, focus on ideas, incorporation of examples and ideas from bibliography, strength and logic of argumentation).
- Organization (organization of ideas, arguments, information and citations).
- Evidence and support (assertions are backed up with reliable sources).
- Language (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, use of text markers).

### **Late Submissions**

- A student will receive a mark of zero for any work (essays or assignments) submitted after the due date indicated by the professor.

criteria	percentage	Learning Objectives	Comments
Essay 2	30 %		
Essay 1	15 %		
Continuous Assessment	20 %		
Final Project	15 %		
Class Participation	20 %		

### RE-SIT / RE-TAKE POLICY

Each student has four (4) chances to pass any given course distributed over two (2) consecutive academic years. Each academic year consists of two calls: one (1) ordinary call (during the semester when the course is taking place); and one (1) extraordinary call (or “re-sit”) in June/July.

Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance requirement in each subject during the semester will automatically fail both calls (ordinary and extraordinary) for that Academic Year and have to re-take the course (i.e., re-enroll) during the next Academic Year.

The Extraordinary Call Evaluation criteria will be subject to the following rules:

- Students failing the course in the ordinary call (during the semester) will have to re-sit evaluation for the course in June / July (except those students who do not comply with the attendance rule, and therefore will not have that opportunity, since they will fail both calls and must directly re-enroll in the course during the next Academic Year).

- It is not permitted to change the format nor the date of the extraordinary call exams or deadlines under any circumstance. All extraordinary call evaluation dates will be announced in advance and must be taken into consideration before planning the summer (e.g. internships, trips, holidays, etc.)

- The June/July re-sit will consist of a comprehensive evaluation of the course. Your final grade for the course will depend on your performance in this exam or evaluation only. I.e., continuous evaluation over the semester (e.g. participation, quizzes, projects and/or other grade components over the semester) will not be taken into consideration on the extraordinary call. Students will have to achieve the minimum passing grade of 5 and the maximum grade will be capped at 8.0 (out of 10.0) – i.e., “notable” in the extraordinary call.

- Re-takers: Students who failed the subject in a previous Academic Year and are now re-enrolled as re-takers in a course will need to check the syllabus of the assigned professor, as well as contact the professor individually, regarding the specific evaluation criteria for them as re-takers in the course during that semester (ordinary call of that Academic Year). The maximum grade that may be obtained as a retaker during the ordinary call (i.e., the 3rd call) is 10.0 (out of 10.0).

After exams and other assessments are graded by the professor (on either the ordinary or extraordinary call), students will have a possibility to attend a review session (whether it be a final exam, a final project, or the final overall grade in a given course). Please be available to attend the session in order to clarify any concerns you might have regarding your grade. Your professor will inform you about the time and place of the review session.

- Students failing more than 18 ECTS credits after the June/July re-sits will be asked to leave the Program. Please, make sure to prepare yourself well for the exams in order to pass your failed subjects.

- In case you decide to skip the opportunity to re-sit for an exam or evaluation during the June/July extraordinary call, you will need to enroll in that course again for the next Academic Year as a re-taker and pay the corresponding tuition fees. As you know, students have a total of four (4) allowed calls to pass a given subject or course, in order to remain in the program.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### Recommended

- IE University Writing Center. *IE Critical Thinking, Writing, and Research Skills*



*manual*. ISBN 0000000000 (Digital)

<https://sites.google.com/faculty.ie.edu/ieuniversitywritingcenter/ie-writing-manual>

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

All course materials and readings will be provided by the professor. Students may access the IE University Writing Center Website to access support materials and resources:

<https://sites.google.com/faculty.ie.edu/ieuniversitywritingcenter/home>

### **BEHAVIOR RULES**

Please, check the University's Code of Conduct [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Please, check the University's Attendance Policy [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ETHICAL POLICY**

Please, check the University's Ethics Code [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

