

# **Guide to First Year Composition**

at the

**University of Tennessee at Martin**

Compiled by David Carithers and Chris Hill

Department of English

College of Humanities and Fine Arts

University of Tennessee at martin

Second Edition

Fountainhead Press

## Introduction

Dear Student,

Welcome to First-Year Composition at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The writing that you will do in your composition classes will be an integral part of your college experience and, we hope, will contribute to a lifetime of learning. But whatever your attitude toward writing and learning is, this handbook is designed to make your composition experience at UTM better. Please familiarize yourself with the contents of this book by the end of the second week of classes.

This handbook is an attempt to gather all the pertinent information about First-Year Composition at UTM and put it in one place. We have tried to answer some of the common questions that arise and provide easy reference to contact information for the English department and associated programs and services, including the Hortense Parrish Writing Center. You will also find information on the English major and minor and the many opportunities available to students who would like to engage in literary and writing activities with others outside of class.

We have included a sample holistic grading scale to give you an idea of how your writing may be assessed in First-Year Composition. And if you are wondering if you are in the right course, check the placement information. New to this edition are two sample student essays from UTM classes.

No two composition classes are the same at UTM, a point we take great pride in, but there are some common elements that our composition program shares. This handbook will clarify those common beliefs and practices that make the UTM First-Year Composition Program unique. We wish you the best of luck in composition, in your college career, and in your future as a lifelong learner.

Sincerely,

David Carithers,  
Chris Hill  
Handbook Editors

## **Placement in First-Year Composition**

First year students receive placement advice based on their high school grade point average and on their ACT English score:

- Students who have entrance placements of an ACT English Composite score below 19 may be required to enroll in the English 100, 110, 112 sequence. There is some variation depending on high school GPA, so consult the English Department office if you have questions about your placement.
- All other students will enroll in the English 111, 112 sequence.

To verify placement, students will complete a writing sample during the first class period of each introductory course.

### **Honors English 111-112**

Students who score 28 or above on the English portion of the Enhanced ACT may enroll in the freshman honors sequence (111H-112H), which offers enrichment and variety, collegial contact with other excellent students, and an obvious designation of distinction on the academic transcript. A student earning an "A" in English 111 may enroll in English 112H if space is available and with the approval of the instructor.

### **Placement of International Students**

1. International Students who have a 500 (paper) or a 173 (computer) TOEFL score or who have completed Level Six in UT Martin's Intensive English Program may enroll in English 100 without taking an English placement exam. Students may also take the English Writing Proficiency Placement Exam, which is administered by the English Department. Students will be placed in English 100 or 111 based on the results of this examination.
2. International students must be enrolled in or have completed Level Six of the UT Martin Intensive English Program or have scored 500 (paper) or 173 (computer) on the TOEFL in order to take the English Writing Proficiency Placement Exam.
3. The required in-class writing sample taken during the first class meeting in all English 100 and 111 classes will continue to be an indicator of appropriate English placement.

## Course Description

### **English 100 (English Studies: Critical Thinking and Writing)**

*This course provides practice in college-level interaction with texts. It will require students to think critically about their reading, to respond in writing to a variety of readings, and to generate, revise, and edit their own written assignments. Three classroom hours and one hour of writing lab per week are required.*

**Important:** *English 100 must precede, and cannot be substituted for, English 110. Students must complete English 100 with a grade of C or higher to advance to English 110.*

In English 100, you can expect to study the following:

- A. Different kinds of expository writing (narration, comparison, argumentation).
- B. How to use the writing process (reading, writing, and revising).
- C. How to handle different writing situations (journals, timed essays, out-of-class writing).
- D. How to interpret various kinds of texts (essays, fiction, film, poetry, drama, hypertext).
- E. How to use the conventions of style, organization, logic, rhetoric and grammar to write precisely.

You will complete the following kinds of assignments:

- A. Read at least one book-length work.
- B. Write at least six finished projects, totaling around 20 typed pages, in addition to informal (ungraded) writing.
- C. Make weekly visits to the University Writing Center (209 Humanities) to satisfy a one-hour-per week commitment—the visits may include:
  - One-on-one tutorials
  - Peer response groups
  - Online tutorials
  - Scheduled workshops and roundtable discussions.

## Course Description

### English 110 (English Composition: Critical Thinking and Writing)

*This course provides further instruction in the fundamentals of writing well. It will require students to use rhetoric, grammar, and style as tools for producing effective prose writing. To achieve this end, students will complete multiple reading and writing assignments. Three classroom hours and one hour of writing lab per week are required.*

**Important:** *You must have completed English 100 with a grade of “C” or better in order to qualify for English 110. You must complete English 110 with a grade of “C” or better in order to advance to English 112. If you complete English 100 and 110, you need not take English 111.*

In English 110, you can expect to study the following:

- A. Different kinds of expository writing (narration, comparison, argumentation, analysis, comparison/contrast).
- B. How to generate a primary idea—a single, compelling thesis—for an essay.
- C. How to use the writing process (reading, writing, and revising).
- D. How to handle different writing situations (journals, timed essays, out-of-class writing).
- E. How to read and interpret different kinds of texts (essays, fiction, film, poetry, drama, hypertext).
- F. How to use the conventions of style, organization, logic, rhetoric and grammar to write precisely.

You will complete the following kinds of assignments:

- A. Read at least one book-length work.
- B. Write at least six finished projects, totaling around 20 typed pages, in addition to informal (ungraded) writing.
- C. Make weekly visits to the University Writing Center (209 Humanities) to satisfy a one-hour-per week commitment—the visits may include:
  - One-on-one tutorials
  - Peer response groups
  - Online tutorials
  - Scheduled workshops and roundtable discussions.

*Many courses will be organized around a central theme. Assignments, grading methods, and other course and classroom policies will be explained by your professor both verbally and in writing. Individual course documentation will be on file in the English department office.*

## Course Description

### English 111 (English Composition)

*This course provides instruction in the fundamentals of writing well. It will require students to use rhetoric, grammar, and style as tools for producing effective written prose. To achieve this end, students will complete multiple reading and writing assignments. Three classroom hours per week are required.*

**Important:** *You must complete English 111 and English 112 in sequence. In order to proceed to English 112, you must pass English 111 with a grade of “C” or higher. A student earning an “A” in English 111 is eligible, with the recommendation of his or her instructor, for Honors English 112.*

In English 111, you can expect to study the following:

- A. How to identify different kinds of written discourse (narration, analysis, argument, comparison), and where to use it.
- B. How to distinguish, in reading and writing, among opinions, facts, and inferences.
- C. How to write thesis-directed essays that develop major points in a logical and convincing manner.
- D. How to use the steps of the writing process (reading, drafting, revising) to develop ideas into coherent sentences, paragraphs, and essays.
- E. How to effectively employ formal elements of writing, including syntax, grammar, diction, usage, and mechanics.
- F. How to write successfully in various contexts, including classroom settings (timed essays, exams, out-of-class assignments), and settings outside the university.
- G. How to incorporate information gathered from multiple sources.

You will complete the following kinds of assignments:

- A. Read several fiction and non-fiction works in various genres, including poetry, short fiction, novel, essay, and drama.
- B. Analyze written expression to determine situation, audience, purpose, point of view, organization, style, and theme.
- C. Write at least six finished projects, incorporating approximately 19 typed pages, in addition to informal writing.

*Many courses will be organized around a central theme. Assignments, grading methods, and other course and classroom policies will be explained by your professor both verbally and in writing. Individual course documentation will be on file in the English department office.*

## Course Description

### **English 112 (English Composition)**

*This course provides instruction in the fundamentals of writing well. It will require students to use rhetoric, grammar, and style as tools for producing effective written prose. To achieve this end, students will complete multiple reading and writing assignments, including at least one project emphasizing research. Three classroom hours per week are required.*

**Important:** *You must complete English 110 or 111 and English 112 in sequence. In order to proceed to English 112, you must pass either English 110 or English 111 with a grade of “C” or higher.*

In English 112, you can expect to continue the work you have completed in earlier composition courses, with a more advanced treatment of research skills and your ability to integrate multiple sources and types of information into a coherent essay. In addition, you will be expected to demonstrate a knowledge of how to use library resources, and how to clearly present information on paper, through electronic media, and orally. English 112 is structured to be a follow-up to previous composition courses.

You will complete the following kinds of assignments:

- A. Complete at least five finished, edited projects, comprising around 22 pages of typed text. You will also produce a good amount of informal (ungraded) writing.
- B. Read several types of fiction and non-fiction works, with a heavier emphasis on the latter.
- C. Examine and interpret forms of visual media, which may include video, still photography, advertising, or web-based media.
- D. Produce at least one fully revised, properly documented, coherently-argued research project.

*Many courses will be organized around a central theme. Assignments, grading methods, and other course and classroom policies will be explained by your professor both verbally and in writing. Individual course documentation will be on file in the English department office.*

## **Sample Holistic Grading Scale**

*The following should provide you with a rough idea of how your assignments will be evaluated. Keep in mind, however, that professors have their own standards, and ultimately they are the ones who will determine how assignments will be evaluated in their classes. Remember, too, that the following is not to be taken as a "check-list." Instead, it provides a summary of the various criteria that might determine your grade. Each individual assignment will have several points of evaluation, so any letter grade you receive is necessarily the product of multiple and variable factors. Ask your professor if you are unsure about how your assignments are being evaluated.*

### **A**

A model paper, excelling in thoughtful treatment of subject, careful attention to all aspects of the essay, and attention to language:

- An unusual, original, or imaginative idea
- Lively verbs, appropriate examples, concrete details, and logical arguments develop the idea
- A sense of completeness/rightness felt about the whole
- Energetic language conveys personal style, a genuine voice
- Thesis clearly presents all elements of the topic
- Topic sentences and paragraph patterns reflect careful, logical organization
- Interest-catching introduction sets stage, gives background
- Conclusion stimulates further thought, shows significance
- Positive elements as effective transitions; parallel structure; and varied sentence beginnings, lengths, and types
- Grammar, punctuation, spelling almost always correct

### **B**

An interesting piece, effective in the handling of topic, showing above-average skills in developing an idea

- Idea developed with relevant points
- General statements supported with a number of specific details
- Clear thesis and focus maintained throughout
- Organization evident and easy to follow
- Effective introductions, imaginative and logical transitions, thoughtful conclusions
- Evidence of revision shown in some variety, paragraph structure, specific details, vocabulary
- Some elements distract from the mostly favorable impression

### **C**

A competent piece of work, showing ability to select an idea, to present it in adequate detail, and to couch it in standard written English

- Some central idea conveyed
- Some details and examples evident, if perhaps somewhat vague
- Thesis and plan evident
- Basic introduction and conclusion may follow a "formula"
- Transitions present
- Efforts to revise apparent in some sentence variety and vocabulary
- Generally correct sentence structure and spelling
- Minor mechanical errors show paper less carefully revised than A or B paper

A paper that fails to achieve competence in content, organization, or correctness is a D paper:

**D or F**

Shows a lack of experience or insufficient attention to the development of the topic and to standard written English

- Idea only slightly formed
- Many generalizations supported by few, if any, specifics or concrete details
- Thesis not clear or not present, perhaps because task or topic not understood
- Main points merge with numerous generalizations
- Little or no attention to introduction, transitions, conclusion
- Numerous spelling errors, misused words, mechanical problems, and sentence faults
- Language inappropriate, used as informally as casual speech

## English Department Policy on Plagiarism

The Department of English has adopted the following definition of plagiarism from the Writing Program Administrators' 2003 document: "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices." You can find the entire document at <http://www.wpacouncil.org>.

***Definition:*** *In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.*

This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers"(WPA Council).

Instructors handle cases of plagiarism differently; students may receive suspension from the university, an F in the course, an F on the assignment, or a chance to re-write the assignment. Any of these possibilities may or may not include a formal letter to the university officer of student conduct.

The following is the Department's official statement on academic integrity and plagiarism:

We as a Department affirm the university's commitment to integrity through "fairness, objectivity, and accountability" (*Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog* 1). Within this frame of reference, we call your attention to the official campus policy on academic integrity, and we stress the vital imperative that every teacher and every student understand and abide by it absolutely:

Commitment to [quality undergraduate education] must include an obligation by all members of the university community to promote and protect the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction and evaluation. Dishonesty or unethical behavior does not belong at an institution dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and learning. Integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation by faculty and honest academic conduct by students. A student may be found to have violated this obligation if he/she:

1. Refers during an academic evaluation to materials, sources, or devices not authorized by the instructor.
2. Provides assistance during an academic evaluation or assignment to another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
3. Receives assistance during an academic evaluation or assignment from another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
4. Possesses, buys, sells, obtains, or uses a copy of any materials intended to be used as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
5. Acts as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation or assignment.
6. Utilizes a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation or assignment.
7. Practices any form of deceit in an academic evaluation or assignment.

8. Depends on the aid of others, in a manner expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
  9. Provides aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
  10. Indulges in plagiarism by presenting as one's own, for academic evaluation or assignment, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources.
  11. Submits the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one's own.
  12. Knowingly permits one's work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization.
  13. Attempts deceitfully to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record.
  14. Indulges in conduct which is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of an instructor or fellow students during a class or examination session.
- (*Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog* 42-43)

For additional information, see the *Student Handbook*.

This policy, instituted by the UTM Faculty Senate, governs not only your conduct but also that of your teachers at UTM. It not only defines certain of your obligations as a UTM student, but it also protects your right to fair academic evaluations. While establishing basic rules about integrity, honesty, and plagiarism, the policy puts some responsibility on the instructor to limit and clarify assignments and to indicate what is and is not legitimate. In short, the policy is concerned that both teachers and students behave ethically in scholarly activities.

Grade appeal procedures are in place at UTM to protect you against unfair grading; if you are accused of violating the policy on academic integrity, you have the protection of judicial appeal and due process (see *Student Handbook* 17-18).

## Further Study in English

Once you complete your sequence of first-year composition classes (100,110, and 112 or 111 and 112) with a grade of “C” or better, you may take further English classes at the 200-level and above. By continuing in English, you will polish your communication skills, develop your critical thinking and analytical skills, and gain knowledge of literary and cultural history. Visit your advisor to see how English courses can fulfill requirements for you.

- 200-level English courses fulfill general education requirements. These courses are often called the sophomore literature surveys:

English 250-51	British Literary Tradition
English 260-61	American Literary Tradition
English 270-71	World Literature

- 300-level courses in writing and literature, more specialized than the above, are popular:

English 305	Advanced Composition
English 310	Fiction Writing
English 320	Introduction to Linguistics
English 325	Technical Communications
English 330	Topics in World Literature
English 341	Topics in American Literature before 1900
English 343	Literatures of Contemporary America
English 345	Black Writers in America
English 350	Women Writers: Race, Class, and Gender
English 355	Folklore
English 360	Sixteenth-Century British Literature
English 365	Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Literature
English 370	Romantic Prose and Poetry
English 375	Development of English Drama
English 380	Modern Drama
English 385	Modern Poetry
English 395	Literature and Film

- We also offer a variety of 400-level courses, including advanced writing options. Check the English department web site for updates on 300 and 400 level course offerings:

<[www.utm.edu/english](http://www.utm.edu/english)>

## **The English Major, Minor, and other Opportunities**

### **English Major and Minor**

If you major or minor in English, you will experience the stimulating worlds of literature, art, history, philosophy, and culture while you work toward practical career goals, develop your capacity to think critically, speak clearly, and solve problems creatively.

The major in English now features three focus areas or tracks for students to choose from: literature, writing, or secondary education. Choose the track that fits your needs. For the major, students take two sophomore literature sequences and ten upper-division (300- and 400- level) courses. Many of our graduates pursue advanced degrees through graduate school, law school, seminary, and other post-baccalaureate work. To complete a minor in English, students complete one sophomore literature sequence and four upper-division courses.

Our graduates have unlimited opportunities; no skill is in more demand than the ability to write well. English majors have found careers as editors at publishing houses, feature writers for magazines and newspapers, public relations strategists, marketing experts, technical writers, and as teachers and educators.

- Students in the bachelor of arts (B.A.) degree program can major in English.
- Students in the B.A. or bachelor of science (B.S.) programs can minor in English.
- Secondary education majors in the B.S. program who want to be English teachers can choose an English concentration that is the equivalent of a major.

**The Mission of the English Department** is to provide courses that foster clear writing and clear thinking and that stress social awareness, aesthetic appreciation, and intellectual growth. English lays the basis for self-expression, self-knowledge, communication and creative adaptation to the changing realities of life. Students and faculty further this development through a variety of service and scholarly activities. (UTM English Department web site, [www.utm.edu/english](http://www.utm.edu/english))

### **Other Opportunities**

The **English Society** is an organized group of majors, minors, and other interested students who meet regularly to discuss literature, share writings, and get to know faculty members and peers.

**Writers' Guild** of UT Martin is a student and faculty writing group that meets weekly in the Hortense Parrish Writing Center to read, share, and respond to original, creative pieces and other work. Contact Anna Clark or Leslie LaChance for more information ([aclark@utm.edu](mailto:aclark@utm.edu), [lachance@utm.edu](mailto:lachance@utm.edu)).

**Sigma Tau Delta**, the International English Honor Society, recognizes outstanding English majors and minors. Contact Heidi Huse from more information (hhuse@utm.edu).

*Bean Switch*, sponsored by the department and the UTM Publications Council and staffed by students, is UTM's literary and arts magazine featuring students' poetry, fiction, non-fiction, photography, and other art. See <<http://beanswitch.utm.edu/>>.

**Writing Awards** of one hundred fifty dollars each are offered annually in the spring for the best student-written essay, scholarly paper, short story, and body of poems. See flyers and ask your composition instructor for details and deadlines.

### **English majors who have made non-traditional use of their degrees:**

- **Dave Barry:** humorist, writer, actor
- **Chevy Chase:** comedian, actor, writer
- **Mario Cuomo:** former Governor of New York
- **John Cuzack:** actor
- **David Duchovny:** actor
- **Michael Eisner:** former Walt Disney CEO
- **Jodie Foster:** actor, filmmaker
- **Kathryn Fuller:** World Wildlife Fund CEO
- **Cathy Guisewite:** cartoonist (Cathy)
- **Famke Janssen:** actor
- **Tommy Lee Jones:** actor
- **Kris Kristofferson:** songwriter, actor
- **Paul Newman:** actor, food entrepreneur
- **Joe Paterno:** football coach (Penn State University)
- **Sally Ride:** astronaut
- **Joan Rivers:** comedienne
- **Diane Sawyer:** broadcast journalist
- **Herb Scannell:** President, Nickelodeon Networks, MTV Networks Group President
- **Paul Simon:** songwriter, singer
- **Steven Spielberg:** filmmaker
- **Marty Schottenheimer:** Coach of San Diego Chargers
- **Christopher Reeve:** late actor, activist for the disabled
- **Clarence Thomas:** U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- **Emma Thompson:** actor
- **Harold Varmus:** Nobel laureate in medicine, former Director of National Institutes of Health
- **Barbara Walters:** broadcast journalist
- **Sigourney Weaver:** actor
- **Pete Wilson:** former Governor of California
- **Bob Woodward:** journalist, wrote *All the President's Men*
- **Renee Zellweger:** actor

Compiled by the Mississippi State University English Department:  
<<http://www.msstate.edu/dept/english/EnCelebs.html>>.

## The Hortense Parrish Writing Center

**Hours:** Monday – Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m..

**Phone:** 731 881-7277

**Location:** 209 Humanities, The University of Tennessee at Martin

The Hortense Parrish Writing Center is committed to helping students become better editors and writers. Through individualized tutoring, writing workshops, computer workshops, roundtable discussions, basic skills review, Talk Time, and other offerings, the Writing Center serves as an academic support service for UT Martin students. Center assistants work with students at all levels of the writing process as they help students learn how to evaluate and edit prose.

**One-on-One Tutoring:** Writing assistants and student assistants lead 20 minute tutoring sessions with individual students.

**Computer Access:** The Writing Center is equipped with six computers and access to a network printer. Tutors are available to help students with word processing and internet research.

**English 100 and English 110:** Each student enrolled in these classes must spend one hour per week in the center.

**Talk Time:** Talk Time is designed to give second language speakers an opportunity to practice language skills, but is open to any student who is interested in improving language skills. Talk Time sessions are held twice each week.

**After-hours Activities:** Writers' Guild, Thursdays at 7:15 p.m.;  
*Bean Switch*, Thursdays at 5:15 p.m.;  
Sigma Tau Delta, TBA.  
Student Literary Awards Reading (March)

**Online Tutoring:** Tutoring is available through the Writing Center's Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <<http://www.utm.edu/organizations/wcenter/>>.

**Writing Center Workshops:** Writing workshops are offered twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday, from 12:15 – 12:50 p.m. Featured workshops include "Writing Power Sentences and Paragraphs," "Editing Comma Splices, Fragments, and Run-ons," "Exploring the Writing Process," "Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism," and "Preparing for Essay Exams." Many workshop handouts can be accessed through the Writing Center Web site. In addition, the Writing Center offers each semester an opportunity for students to attend roundtables on literature and creative writing. Special roundtables are held for Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), and International Week (April).

*Visit the Writing Center Web Site today:* <<http://www.utm.edu/organizations/wcenter/>>.

## Permission to Publish Form, Fall Semester

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and/or use as an example for writing instruction.

Check One:

Yes, but take my name off of it.

Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

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Name (please print)

---

Signature

Date

## Permission to Publish Form, Fall Semester

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and/or use as an example for writing instruction.

Check One:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, but take my name off of it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

\_\_\_\_\_ No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

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Name (please print)

---

Signature

Date

## Permission to Publish Form, Spring Semester

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and / or use as an example for future writing instruction.

Check One:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, but take my name off of it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

\_\_\_\_\_ No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Permission to Publish Form, Spring Semester

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and / or use as an example for future writing instruction.

Check One:

Yes, but take my name off of it.

Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

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Name (please print)

---

Signature

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Date

## Permission to Publish Form, Summer Sessions

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and / or use as an example for future writing instruction.

Check One:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, but take my name off of it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

\_\_\_\_\_ No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Permission to Publish Form, Summer Sessions

I, the undersigned, hereby give permission to my instructor to make copies of my written work for the purposes of academic research, faculty development, and / or use as an example for future writing instruction.

Check One:

Yes, but take my name off of it.

Yes, and you can leave my name on it.

No (don't sign before giving to instructor)

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Name (please print)

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Signature

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Date

## Important Dates

### Fall 2010

April 5-13	Registration Begins
July 13-August 24	Early Fee Payments
August 24	Each semester <b>EVERY STUDENT</b> must confirm that they plan to attend UTM. All classes will be removed from the student's schedule if student has not submitted a plan to the Business Office confirming their plan to attend UTM.
	<b><u>This Includes Students with full (or partial):</u></b>
	✓ <b><u>Any Form of Financial Aid</u></b>
	✓ <b><u>Fee Waivers</u></b>
	✓ <b><u>Scholarships and/or Grants</u></b>
	<b><u>A plan must be submitted to the Business Office!</u></b>
August 27-29	Freshman Year Initiative (FYI)
August 27	Advising
August 30	Classes Begin
August 30-September 3	Late Registration
September 3	**End First Adjustment Period:
	✓ (Last day to Add)
	✓ (Last day to Drop with no record of enrollment)
September 3	Each semester <b>EVERY STUDENT</b> must confirm that they plan to attend UTM. All classes will be removed from the student's schedule if student has not submitted a plan to the Business Office confirming their plan to attend UTM.
September 6	Holiday
October 13	Fee Deferment Payment Due
October 22	Mid-Term Progress Report Due
October 23-26	Fall Break
October 29	**Last Day to Drop a Class
November 15-23	Advising & Early Registration (Spring 2011)
November 24-28	Holiday
December 9	Commencement Practice 4 p.m. (Elam Center)
December 9	I's calculate as F's from Spring 2010
December 10	I's calculate as F's from Summer 2010
December 10	Classes end
December 11-17	Final Exams
December 18	Commencement 11 a.m.

## Sample Essays

These essays were written in UTM English courses in recent years. The first, Mallory Dalton's "*I Am One of You Forever: A Hero's Journey*," was submitted in English 111. Trey White's "The Clear Message of the Garbled Prose: The Grammar of Cormac McCarthy," was submitted in English 425: Advanced Grammar. Both essays use sources effectively and are correctly documented according to MLA style. Notice how the writers introduce the sources before quoting from them and the way the sources support the writers' arguments while not taking over their discussions.

Mallory Dalton

October 9, 2007

Honors Composition 111

### *I Am One of You Forever: A Hero's Journey*

*I Am One of You Forever*, a short but memorable novel by the southern fiction writer Fred Chappell, looks back on the beginning of adolescence for Jess, a boy living with his family on a North Carolina mountain farm. Jess' experiences in *I Am One of You Forever* are parallel with the hero's journey<sup>1</sup> as defined in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The stages of the hero's journey that will be discussed in this essay are the following: the call to adventure, supernatural aid, the crossing of the first threshold, the belly of the whale, the road of trials, the ultimate boon, and the magic flight. Throughout the novel, Chappell uses magic realism to fill the stories with fantasy and adventure, making Jess' journey perilous and full of ogre-sized obstacles to overcome. Taking the novel as a partly autobiographical work and Jess as a young Fred Chappell, the reader sees Jess' journey culminate in his acquisition of new knowledge about life and a sense of self; consequently, the gifts that he brings back to bestow on all humanity are his writings.

Joseph Campbell describes the first stage of the hero's journey, the call to adventure, as "a blunder [that] reveals an unsuspected world...the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood...when complete [it] amounts to a dying and a birth" (51). In *I Am One of You Forever*, Jess' call to adventure signifies the coming of a new stage in his life—adolescence. In the prologue, titled "The Overspill," Jess and his father plant a garden and build a small bridge to surprise Cora, Jess' mother. When she sees that their hard work is destroyed by a flood of water, she starts to cry: "Then my mother looked past my father's shoulder, looked through the bright skin of the tear, at me...As soon as I got used to the strange light inside the tear, I began to swim clumsily toward my parents" (Chappell 6). This is the novel's first instance of magic realism, and it marks the beginning of a series of fantastical adventures. Jess has stumbled into the magical realm of adolescence, and destiny has summoned him to discover his role in his family and what it means to be a man. There are many times in the novel when he is at a loss trying to understand the adult world. The scene with his mother's tear can also be seen as a dying and a birth because when he enters the tear, childhood Jess has begun to deteriorate and the tear itself is womb-like, symbolizing rebirth.

When the hero begins his journey, he is typically aided by supernatural forces, such as the appearance of a guide. This guide helps by offering advice and any tools the hero might need. Although he is a protective figure, he is also dangerous, simply because he is "the lurer of the innocent soul into realms of trial" (Campbell 73). If the guide doesn't take the hero into these realms, he's not at any risk, but he also has no chance of reaching his ultimate goal. This guide in *I Am One of You Forever* is Jess' father, Joe

Robert, who is responsible for most of Jess' adventures. Campbell says that the hero is "covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper" (97). Some of the 'amulets' Joe Robert provides include the pullet eggs he hides inside chocolate candy wrappers, the letters he writes to Uncle Luden, the sleeping draught he uses on Uncle Gurton, and the gum he switches with Johnson Gibb's gum. Uncle Luden also aids Jess by giving him his first drink of wine, which he sees as a small rite of passage. Jess is not always sure what his place is in the family and sometimes feels like an outsider; Joe Robert includes Jess and guides him through a series of adventures.

Jess now must cross the threshold into "the zone of magnified power...beyond is darkness, the unknown, and danger" (Campbell 77). Chappell uses elements of magic in describing Jess' trials; nevertheless, the unknown into which Jess crosses is essentially the greatest of realities. The guardian of the threshold is none other than Johnson Gibbs, and he pulls Jess across by telling him an important secret: Johnson has joined the army. Up to this point the year the novel takes place has been relatively unimportant. Now that the world has marched up to Jess' porch and knocked on his front door, however, it becomes important to know that World War II is being fought. In a way, the novel follows the theme of the folk mythologies, which "populate with deceitful and dangerous presences every desert place outside the normal traffic of the village" (Campbell 78). The hero is safe and cozy inside his village, but once he travels outside he finds forests full of monsters. Similarly, Jess' sheltered life in the mountains is shattered when Johnson Gibbs is killed by an exploding mortar round. In his relationship with Johnson Gibbs, Jess crosses the threshold between childhood and early adulthood.

Johnson Gibbs' death is foreshadowed, almost foretold, in the storm in the chapter "The Change of Heart." The storm and its apparent possession of Johnson provides a better visualization of Jess crossing the threshold into 'the unknown,' from realism to magic realism. Jess describes the sky breaking open during the storm, and "inside this cylinder of white-purple light swam shoals of creatures we could never have imagined" (Chappell 71). According to Campbell, Once the hero has entered this new and dangerous world, he experiences a rebirth, usually after his apparent death—he is eaten and enters the belly of the whale, but escapes and is reborn from the whale's womb. During the heart of the storm Jess describes being lifted up into the air with Johnson and his father: "We were bewildered and frightened not by the nearness of death but the nearness of life; we were buffeted by recognition" (Chappell 72). Jess being swallowed by the storm and then spit back out again symbolizes that he has undergone this process of rebirth and is now ready to begin his road of trials.

"The hero [now] moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 97). Jess encounters a series of interesting uncles that he has to deal with. Uncle Runkin is obsessed with death and infests the house with gloom; Jess steals a dream-filled nap in his homemade coffin, in which he descends into the underworld and encounters Death himself. He manages to resurface, saying, "Death and I had met face to face and scared the pee out of each other" (Chappell 132). Jess faces his fear of the psychotically cruel medicine man, Doc McGreavy, and his evil horse, Satan. He wrestles with a vision of Helen of Troy, trying to understand what it means; Campbell describes the hero as meeting with a goddess: "She is the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and

unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride... Time sealed her away, yet she is dwelling still, like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea” (110-111). Jess’ trials also include overcoming his grief for Johnson, symbolized as a struggle with a reappearing telegram. One important internal struggle that Jess goes through is sparked by Uncle Zeno, whose stories seem to absorb the characters about whom they are told until they no longer exist in real life.

The hero goes through these trials in order to attain the ‘ultimate boon.’ This is usually seen as some kind of elixir of life, something that will grant the hero immortality. The chapter titled “The Beard” symbolizes Jess’ acquisition of his ultimate boon and also the stage of the journey called the magic flight. Uncle Gurton is a mysterious character, mostly uncommunicative, who has a legendary beard that he keeps tucked under his overalls. Jess and his father sneak into the slumbering beast’s dwelling after slipping sleeping draught into its buttermilk. They do this in hopes of uncovering the secret of the beard, of stealing the beast’s treasure—namely, knowledge. Jess watches as the beard comes alive, and from its mysterious flow emerges a number of storybook creatures, just as later, from Jess’ imagination—aka Fred Chappell’s imagination—will emerge a number of characters and stories. In this way he does not attain physical immortality, but he does attain immortality from his many great works. His stories are the blessing or gift that he brings back from his journey and bestows on the rest of the world.

Next is the magical flight: “If the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian...then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit” (Campbell 197). Jess and his father have uncovered too powerful a secret; the source of the beard is unending; it fills the room. They eventually decide it’s

time to leave: “But as I was getting set to mount the banister, my left foot tangled in a wavelet of beard and I pitched forward...I was sure I was drowned or strangled...but my right hand on the banister held me up and I twisted over and got hold with my left hand and pulled myself up” (Chappell 60). Jess escapes with his new knowledge.

If Jess’ journey in *I Am One of You Forever* is looked at as being partly autobiographical, then the trophy obtained at the end of the journey is Jess’ understanding of the power of storytelling and Chappell’s discovery of his own unique voice. The novel correlates well with Joseph Campbell’s definition of the hero’s journey partly because of the use of magic realism; it makes Jess’ journey almost as full of fantasy as a mythological hero’s journey. Fred Chappell inspires the reader to imagine his or her own struggles in the world as a journey—a journey that is full of “strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight” (Campbell 58).

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>I want to acknowledge that the idea to compare *I Am One of You Forever* with the hero’s journey was first brought to my attention by Professor David Carithers, who visited my composition class to discuss the novel.

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The Clear Message of the Garbled Prose: The Grammar of Cormac McCarthy

In modern fiction, the rules of grammar are not absolute. While there is an established standard for what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical, the author has license to set those rules aside in order to perfect his or her work. Cormac McCarthy does exactly that. Dana Phillips, a literature scholar, describes McCarthy's prose as "remarkable for its syntactic complexity" and notes "its recondite vocabulary" (435).

While her assertions are no doubt correct, they may be understated – McCarthy throws all current grammatical standards aside in his novels. This grammatical complexity occurs on several levels: McCarthy uses nonstandard grammar in his narrative structure, his characters use nonstandard grammar, and his characters often employ a second language. Moreover, McCarthy's prose often contrasts with itself – grammatical simplicity in the narrative is brought into sharp relief by moments of strikingly complex grammatical acrobatic. The overall effect of McCarthy's use of grammar is to add believability to his work and grant a sense of perspective, as well as making a statement about the importance (or unimportance) of standard English grammar.

What immediately strikes the reader when looking at a Cormac McCarthy novel is his use of nonstandard grammar in the novel's narrative structure. At first, McCarthy's style may seem similar to other authors. His narrative method is not always severely ungrammatical, as can be observed from this passage from *The Road*: "He sat up and felt about for the boy. He held his hand to the thin ribs. Warmth and movement. Heartbeat"

(116). While the preceding text makes use of a pair of sentence fragments, it is nothing that a well-read fiction reader hasn't seen before. There are few modern novels, in fact, that don't make use of the sentence fragment. However, McCarthy's method of writing is not always so simple. The following passage from the same novel displays McCarthy's true grammatical complexity: "The boy had fallen. He dropped the armload of blankets and the tarp and went and picked him up. He was shivering. He picked him up and held him. I'm sorry, he said. I'm sorry" (99). There are several important things to notice about the passage above. First and most obvious is McCarthy's unique style when dealing with quotation: the man's words are not set off by quotation marks nor are they separated into a different paragraph. The reader is not given time to pause; the narrative simply flows into the dialogue with no warning. Thus, the dialogue is granted a sense of immediacy.

The sense of immediacy is heightened when one notes that McCarthy does not always include the apostrophe in his contractions; the apostrophe is only included when its absence would make the meaning of the word in question unclear. Therefore, the words "don't," "can't," and "ain't" become "dont," "cant," and "aint." Contractions in their own right grant a sense of informality to the work; contractions without their apostrophes take this informality to another level, seeming to give the work a hurried sense. The use of nonstandard contractions may also help the reader to ascertain the viewpoint of the novel; the young boy in *The Road* is only slightly literate, and the contractions as the reader sees them match something he might write: the *sound* is correct, but the spelling is slightly off.

A final point to note with McCarthy's narrative style is his tendency toward the ambiguous – in the passage from page 99 given above, note that the reader doesn't know *who* is shivering; it could be either the boy or the man. Context dictates that it is likely the man who picks up the boy and holds him, but the sentence itself gives no clue – the ambiguity demonstrated in this passage is not uncommon to McCarthy's work.

Another level of grammatical complexity is added when one examines the way that McCarthy's characters speak. His characters, particularly those in *Blood Meridian*, speak with a heavily Southern accent, so almost every spoken sentence is deviant from standard English. Dr. Lynn Alexander asserts that “the use of dialect in fiction is always political, for it aligns the speaker with a particular geographical area or social class” (1). Nothing could be more truthful when regarding McCarthy's work – the characters' accents tie them to places as well as ways of life. In one instance from *Blood Meridian*, the main character converses with a Georgian, whose discourse shows deep and complex shades of dialect: “I was sickern a dog, the boy said. I was afraid I was goin to die and then I was afraid I wasn't” (70). Before the Georgian's grammar is addressed on its own, it is beneficial to note still more oddities in McCarthy's grammatical style. McCarthy does not attempt to mask his characters' grammatical shortcomings; the apostrophes that denote the missing letters in “sickern” and “goin” are not included. In keeping with the general pattern, the apostrophe in “wasn't” is excluded as well. “Sickern a dog” is a colloquialism common to the Deep South, especially when it appears in severely contracted form, as McCarthy has written it here. The Georgian continues to use Southern dialect, telling the kid: “They killed Clark and another boy I never did know his name” (70). The previous sentence, when written for clarity, should be split with a

comma to differentiate the two separate clauses. McCarthy has chosen to write the sentence the way it is spoken, however, omitting the comma so that the reader does not pause between the two clauses. This grammatical choice is significant because if the comma is left intact, the sentence fails to read as Southern dialect.

McCarthy does not solely employ Southern dialect in his work. In another example drawn from *Blood Meridian*, the characters converse with a Mennonite, who speaks his own version of English: “Do ye cross that river with yon filibuster armed ye’ll not cross it back” (40). His manner of speaking is wholly different from the Southern mode employed by the main character and most of the secondary characters. It could be argued that the Mennonite’s accent differentiates him as something of an exotic other, a stock fiction character whose warnings are generally not to be ignored. When the Mennonite’s warnings turn out to be well founded, more validity can be added to that claim. It is the character’s dialect, and nothing else, that sets him apart from the rest of the characters. Comprehensively, both the dialect employed by the main characters and the dialect used by the Mennonite add to the verisimilitude of the story; the characters speak as actual persons would speak at the time and place, the American West in the 1850’s.

Serving much the same purpose as dialect is McCarthy’s use of a second language (Spanish) spoken by several of his characters. The Spanish language is used in *Blood Meridian* to such an extent that a person without at least a cursory knowledge of the language would have trouble following the exchanges. There is an extended passage in the middle of the novel in which the kid is having his fortune read by Tarot, but the explanations and interpretations are all in Spanish – unintelligible to the kid and to many

readers. Some relief is offered when the Spanish-speaking characters attempt English, though their words are often mangled: “You are Texas, the old man said. I was Texas three year” (101). Most interesting is when Spanish and English are mixed: “You are sociedad de guerra. Conra los barbaros” (102). Each instance of a second or mixed language is significant. When the kid is listening to his fortune, he can only see the cards and listen to the vocal tone of the reader – he knows that his fortune is bad, but doesn’t know how – use of a second language becomes a tool of foreshadowing as well as a physical representation of the kid’s half-understood fears. The mangled attempts at English by Spanish-speaking characters represent how little the kid understands his own motives as a hunter of Native American scalps. The mixed Spanish-English passages take that lack of understanding even further, delineating what the kid does understand and what he doesn’t. The “You are,” the only English portion of the phrase, represents the only thing that is certain about the young men – they know that they exist, that they are soldiers, but they don’t understand what they’re doing or why; the reasons behind their actions are clouded, garbled like words in an unknown tongue.

Interestingly, McCarthy does not allow the reader to become used to the simple, stark sentences in his novels. The rustic narrative style is often thrown into sharp relief by moments of amazing diction acrobatics. The following sentence taken from *Blood Meridian*, for example, represents the normal process in which McCarthy describes a scene:

They drifted as the day advanced from wall to wall to keep out the sun.  
The boy from Georgia told him of his comrades displayed on the slabs  
cold and dead in the market. The captain headless in a wallow half eaten

by hogs. He ran his heel out in the dust and gouged a little place for it to rest. (70)

The scene is descriptive, yet stark; the description contains no similes or metaphors, no figures of speech whatever. The scene even contains a sentence fragment and an ambiguous passage – note that in the passage above one does not clearly know if it is the comrades or the slabs that are cold and dead. Passages like these account for most of McCarthy’s narrative, but every now and then the reader is treated to something different: “Their escorts in varied suits of timeworn finery, the prisoners in rags. They’d been given blankets and squatting by the desert fires at night sunblackened and bony and wrapped in these serapes they looked like God’s profoundest peons” (71). This selection is altogether different – the vocabulary, for instance, is on an entirely different level; the guards are described in their “timeworn finery” and the prisoners as “God’s profoundest peons,” each suggestive of levels of detail beyond that of mere literal description. The simile and metaphor are both employed in the passage, though the sentence fragment remains intact. Each passage is given emphasis by the other; the reader notices the complexity of the second by having read several selections like the first and pays closer attention to the first in expectation of more passages like the second.

The phenomenon of contrast is not limited to the narrative. Moments of rhetorical brilliance are also observable in the speech of McCarthy’s characters, such as this example spoken by the judge in *Blood Meridian*:

Ladies and gentlemen I feel it my duty to inform you that the man holding this revival is an imposter. He holds no papers of divinity from any institution recognized or improvised. He is altogether devoid of the least

qualification to the office he has usurped and has only committed to memory a few passages from the good book for the purpose of lending to his fraudulent sermons some faint flavor of the piety he despises. In truth, the gentlemen standing here before you posing as a minister of the Lord is not only totally illiterate but is also wanted by the law in the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Arkansas. (7)

The above passage displays complex grammatical structuring and composition and is totally devoid of grammatical error or deviation from standard English. In the passage, the judge even links illiteracy with moral deviance – in the same sentence, the preacher is accused of being illiterate and of lawlessness, drawing a link between the two. The passage is immediately contrasted with the simpler voice of the majority of McCarthy's characters: "Why damn my eyes if I won't shoot the son of a bitch" (7).

The irony is that the characters in McCarthy's novel that speak well are neither morally upright nor truly intelligent – the judge is a savage, sadistic man who comes into towns for the sole purpose of starting fights and causing general unrest, while another well-spoken character, Captain White, is the leader of a poorly conceived, suicidal campaign against Mexico in which at least thirty men lose their lives. In the words of the kid, "By rights they ought to pickle me. For ever takin up with such a fool" (70).

Taken alone, any one of the grammatical eccentricities discussed so far would provide material for study that could fill pages upon pages. However, McCarthy builds one unconventional grammatical brick on top of another until his prose is swimming in entirely foreign grammatical waters. This passage from *Blood Meridian* sums up the combinations of stylistic elements perfectly:

Que quiere? cried the leader.

The riders cackled and slapped at one another. They had nudged their horses forward and they began to ride them about without aim. The leader turned to the two afoot.

Buscan a los indios?

With this some of the men dismounted and fell to hugging one another and weeping shamelessly. The leader looked at them and grinned, his teeth white and massive, made for foraging.

Loonies, Sproule said. They're loonies.

The kid looked up at the leader. How about a drink of water? he said.

The leader sobered, he pulled a long face. Water? he said.

We aint got no water, said Sproule.

But my friend how no? Is very dry here. (64)

There are lots of things going on in this selection, including the use of Spanish (which is not properly punctuated) as well as the poorly translated English used by the leader. None of the dialogue is set off by quotation marks, and Southern dialect is used without masking by the author. The overall effect is profound; the novel feels unaccountably *real*, and, even though the novel is written in third person perspective, the reader knows that he or she is viewing the world through the eyes of the main character, the ever-unnamed kid.

It would be a mistake to argue that McCarthy does not properly grasp English grammar, for all of his works follow the same grammatical pattern. The popular grammar textbook *Understanding English Grammar* reminds us that “modern linguists,

emphasizing the primacy of speech, recognized that every variety, or dialect, of English is equally grammatical” (5). It would also be a mistake to assert that McCarthy thinks that standard English grammar is unimportant. Rather, it is more accurate to say that McCarthy knows standard English and knows that contorting it in certain ways, playing with structure or punctuation, for example, can add flavor to a work of fiction that no amount of description in standard English could equal. McCarthy uses an innovative narrative style, a second language, area-specific dialects, and contrasting diction to construct novels that are unparalleled in grammatical magnificence.

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