

The Art of the Sentence: Style through Grammar

ENG 420, Fall 2013
CRN 13056
MWF 1000-1050, 16 Pacific

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Course Syllabus

Course Description and Objectives: We are going to look very closely at sentences to see how they work, how the individual parts of speech draw together into syntax, and what effect (artistic and otherwise) these patterns of syntax create. The course will mix the technical study of sentence structure and reflection upon the artful potential of those sentence elements. *Grammar by Diagram* will provide an introduction to (or review of) English grammar. The process of diagramming sentences will also develop our sense of sentence structure. Virginia Tufte's *Artful Sentences: Style as Syntax* is a collection of and reflection upon sentences. In individual projects and in pooling observations and ideas in our in-class discussions, we will develop a critical language based in grammar for describing style. We will be looking at our own sentences and writing styles in order to gain more artistic and technical control of them. Throughout, we will reflect on the process of learning and engaging with sentences at this level of detail and discuss how writing may be taught. We may also, perhaps, enjoy the possibilities of English and have some fun with words.

Required Texts: *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style*, Virginia Tufte (AS)
Grammar by Diagram, 2nd edition, Cindy L. Vitto (GD)
Additional readings will be provided on Blackboard

Grading and Assignments

Participation

Your active, thoughtful, regular, participation in our work on grammar and style will be crucial to the success of this course. Each of you has unique sensibilities, experiences, and powers of observation that will help all of us understand how grammar and style work on us. You all have different reasons for being in this class, some that might be expected (to work on your own writing, or to prepare for teaching writing) and perhaps some that might not. Your working knowledge of grammar and your interest in the style and art of words are important and valuable. Listening is therefore as important as speaking, drawing out your colleagues and inviting their contributions as valuable as those you might make yourselves. To accomplish our course goals, all students must feel their contributions are valued and be treated with respect. If this is ever not the case, please see me right away. The Bias Response Team and the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity can provide additional assistance. Behavior that disrupts the learning environment of this classroom may result in your course grade being lowered.

Discussion: On days a reading from Tufte is due, choose a passage from the chapter to bring to our attention and be prepared to talk about it in some detail. I strongly recommend keeping a notebook to record observations and questions about readings, passages we discuss in class, and your own work with sentences.

Paragraphs: You will each participate in providing writing for us to think about. We will begin most class meetings looking at a paragraph of English prose (no drama or poetry) from a novel, website, technical manual, scientific paper, newspaper, magazine, short story, or any other

source you choose. Be prepared to talk about why you chose it and what you find noteworthy or interesting about it. Provide the full bibliographic citation, including page number, so that others can investigate further if needed to do so. These passages are due according to the schedule. We will write about and discuss these passages.

Academic Paper Sample: Each member of the class will submit a five-page or five-page excerpt of an academic paper for use in the Academic Writing Analysis assignment. These may also be used anonymously in class activities.

20% Quizzes

Five quizzes will test your knowledge of sentence structure and the grammar we have covered in class the previous week. For example, quiz #1 at the end of week 2 will have questions about material covered in week 1, and so on.

20% Academic Writing Worksheets

These worksheets ask you to identify structure and patterns of sentences in an essay you have written during your university career. These are opportunities to learn about the sentences you write rather than occasions for evaluative comments.

20% Analysis of Academic Writing

This 5-7 page analysis of your academic writing style is based upon the information collected in the worksheets. This analysis should characterize distinctive features, note those unused, and offer possible revisions with discussion of the reasons for the changes.

10% Style Project Proposal and Presentation

35% Style Project

In this project, you will analyze the style of a writer or of a type of writing in a 7-9 page paper. Proposals are due week seven, the project at our final exam time. You will give a short presentation to the class on your style project during weeks nine or ten.

Course Policies

Attendance: Your regular attendance is important for your individual success and that of the course as a whole. You may miss three class meetings for any reason without penalty. I suggest holding these in reserve for illness and unexpected, minor discombobulation. The fourth, fifth, and sixth absence will each lower your course grade by a third of a letter grade. The seventh and subsequent absences each lower your course grade by a full letter grade. In the event of a serious illness or crisis that interferes with your regularly attending class, be in touch with me as soon as possible, so we can decide together how best to proceed.

Academic Honesty: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Consult the library website <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/> for a definition and examples of plagiarism and the library guides to citing sources, <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/citing/>. If you have questions about how to integrate outside sources or are looking for more information to complete an assignment, please talk to me first. In cases where plagiarism is established, the penalty is automatic failure of the course. Some cases may result in additional sanctions, up to and including suspension and/or dismissal from the university.

Accommodation: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155.

Incompletes: The grade of Incomplete is awarded only when the quality of course work is satisfactory and some minor yet essential requirement has not been completed for reasons beyond the student's control.

Notification of changes to class schedule: In the event severe weather or some other unforeseen event that results in class being cancelled I will send email to you from the course Blackboard site and post an announcement on Blackboard. Be sure you are checking your university email account regularly.

Late Assignments: I do not accept assignments on a delayed or alternate schedule without advance consultation. If you are having difficulty with an assignment, be in touch with me in advance of the due date. If you will be absent from class on a day materials are due, you may hand in your work early.

Emergency Preparedness: Call 911 in the event of an emergency. Call the UO Police Department (541) 346-2919 for non-emergency assistance. If we need to evacuate the building during class, two possible evacuation routes include the stairs to the south and to the north. If we need to evacuate the building during class, our designated assembly point is on the west side of Pacific. Be sure your cell phone is set up to receive UO Alert text messages: 1) Login to DuckWeb, 2) Click on the "Personal Information" menu, and 3) Click on "Enter/Update Emergency Alert Phone." More information on emergency preparedness can be found online at emc.uoregon.edu