

## The Art of the Sentence: Style through Grammar

ENG 420, Fall 2014

CRN 13056

MWF 1100-1150, 246 GER

Carolyn Bergquist, Ph.D.

Office: 122 PLC, Phone: 6-2695, Email: [cjb@uoregon.edu](mailto:cjb@uoregon.edu)

Office Hours: U 1400-1530, W 1300-1430, and by appointment

### 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 technical study of sentence structure and reflection upon the artful potential of those sentence elements, with the goal that each of us is able to see and describe how sentences achieve their effects. *Grammar by Diagram* will provide an introduction to (or review of) English grammar, and 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 that serves as a starting point for each of our own descriptive and analytic work. In individual projects and our pooled observations about writing we discuss in class, we will each develop a critical language based in grammar for describing written prose 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. We may also, perhaps, enjoy the possibilities of English and have some fun with words.

Students in *Art of the Sentence* will work on these English Department Learning Outcomes:

- Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
- Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
- Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
- Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

#### Required Texts:

*Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style*, Virginia Tufte (AS)

*Grammar by Diagram*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cindy L. Vitto (GD)

Additional readings will be provided on Blackboard or distributed in class

### Class Participation

Creative analysis almost always starts from an intellectual wonderment and willingness to explore unknown territory. On this path, each of you brings unique sensibilities, experiences, and powers of observation that will help all of us understand how grammar and style work on us. Your active, thoughtful, regular participation in our work on grammar and style will therefore be crucial to the success of this course. You each have reasons for being in this class, some that might be expected and perhaps some that might not. Your working knowledge of grammar, your sense of what makes a good sentence, and your interest in the style and art of words are important and valuable to our work in this class. 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, students must feel their contributions valued and must 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. Please keep in mind that behavior that disrupts the learning environment of this classroom may result in your course grade being lowered.

### Preparation for Class Participation

**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. A journal in which you play with different sentence structures and variations that strike you as interesting or difficult or fun or annoying or stunning or odd will give you more facility and command of the possibilities and uses of different sentence patterns. Recent research suggests that taking handwritten notes requires more cognitive processing than taking notes on a keyboard.<sup>1</sup> My observation over the years is that students who explore sentence patterns with pen or pencil and paper internalize them and the ability to create variations to a much greater degree than those who do not or who engage this process solely on a keyboard.

**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 chosen by someone in the class. On the day we look at the passage you have chosen, be prepared to talk for two minutes or so about why you chose it and what you find noteworthy, lovely, irritating, or beautiful in it. Provide the **full** bibliographic citation, including page number, so that others can investigate further if so moved. These passages are due the week before they are used in class according to the schedule distributed in week one. We will write about and discuss these passages in class.

**Academic Paper Sample:** Each member of the class will submit a three-page to four-page excerpt of an academic paper that you have written for another course for use in the Academic Writing Analysis assignment. These may also be used anonymously in class activities, so choose something you wouldn't mind seeing project or distributed in class. The more typical of your usual writing the more helpful it will be to you in this class.

### Grading and Assignments

#### 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. These will include sentences to diagram in addition to identifying parts of speech, phrases, and clauses.

#### 30% Analysis of Academic Writing

This 5-7 page analysis of your academic writing style is based upon the information collected in the worksheets and your own analysis. This analysis should characterize distinctive features, note those unused, and offer possible revisions with discussion of the reasons for the changes. This assignment is in no way an opportunity to reflect upon notions of being a poor writer, which dog many of us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking" *Psychological Science* 25 (2014): 1159, accessed September 28, 2014, doi: 10.1177/0956797614524581

The analysis should focus solely on the sentences that are there, the sentences that could be there instead, and the reasons for making those choices.

### **10% Style Project Proposal and Presentation**

#### **40% Style Project**

In this project, you will analyze the style of a writer or of a type of writing of your choice in a 7-9 page paper. Be thinking early in the term about what might interest you and bring possibilities to my office hours to discuss well in advance of the proposal due date. 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, our designated assembly point is on the west side of Pacific. To receive alerts about emergencies on campus, set up your cell phone 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](http://emc.uoregon.edu).

### **Sexual Violence Statement, Mandatory Reporting, and Confidentiality**

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).