

## The Art of the Sentence: Style through Grammar

ENG 420, Fall 2018  
CRN 12195  
TR 1000-1120, 232 Lillis

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Office Hours: M 12:00 – 1:30, Th 1:00 – 2:30, and by appointment

### Course Syllabus

**Course Description:** 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 in our pooled observations about writing from class discussions, we will each develop a critical language based in grammar for describing prose style. We will be looking at our own sentences and writing styles in order to gain more artistic and technical facility. 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.

#### Course Goals:

- Develop a working knowledge of sentence structure and terminology.
- Develop a method of inquiry for identifying sentence features that are initially unclear.
- Apply that working knowledge of sentence structure and terminology to analysis of the rhetorical and artful effects of sentences in texts that matter to you.
- Recognize potential interplay between what sentences say and how they say them.
- Be able to describe how and in what instances the structure of sentences contributes to the overall effect of prose.

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

#### 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 Canvas or distributed in class

#### Optional Texts:

*Rhetorical Style*, Jeanne Fahnestock

### Class Participation

Creative analysis almost always starts from a wondering and having a willingness to explore unknown territory. To this analysis, each of you brings unique sensibilities, experiences, and powers of observation that will help all of us understand how sentence structure 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. 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, all 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.

### **Preparing for Class**

“Under the UO quarter system, each undergraduate credit reflects approximately thirty hours of student engagement” (UO Registrar’s website). This means that for every hour spent in class, undergraduate students are expected to spend three hours of learning activities outside class. What follows are suggestions for how you might productively use some of those hours each week preparing for class.

On days reading from *Artful Sentences* is due, you should have read the chapter and made notes in the text or separately that outline Tufte’s claims for the effects of the part of speech or syntax discussed in the chapter. These notes will serve as the starting point for your own analysis assignments for the course. Choose sentences Tufte gives as examples for these effects that you would like to explore further in small groups or in whole class discussions. Also, bring questions or points to clarify.

On days reading from *Grammar by Diagram* is due, you should have read the chapter and completed the assigned exercises for the chapter before class. The assigned list is available on Canvas, and it is from these that exam questions are taken. Bring questions about the material with you to class.

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. 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.

## **Grading and Assignments**

Instructions for and details about these assignments will be available on a separate handout

- 15% Exams, 3 at 5% each
- 5% Paragraph Marking
- 30% Analysis of Academic Writing
- 10% Style Project Proposal and Presentation
- 40% Style Project

## **Required but Ungraded**

**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 and Paragraph Marking assignments. These may also be used anonymously in class activities, so choose something you wouldn’t mind seeing projected or distributed in class. The more typical of your usual writing the better.

**Passages for Analysis:** You will each participate in providing writing for us to analyze at the start of a class period. We will begin most class meetings looking at one or two examples 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 say 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 on Canvas the week before they are used in class according to the schedule distributed in week one.

### Course Policies

**Alternate Assignment Due Dates:** Arranging an alternate due date is possible for most written assignments when these arrangements are made in advance of the due date. If you need an extension, check in with me by email or in person to let me know where you are with the assignment and your plans for completing it. Except in emergencies, I will generally accept work on an alternate schedule only when we have completed arrangements before the assignment's due date. If you are experiencing difficulties of any kind that are affecting your participation in this class, please let me know. Doing so gives us options for planning and also finding resources to assist your studies.

**Attendance:** Your regular attendance is important for your individual success and that of the course as a whole. You may miss two class meetings (one week) for any reason without penalty. I suggest holding these in reserve for illness and unexpected, minor discombobulation. The third, fourth, and fifth absences will each lower your course grade by a third of a letter grade. The sixth and subsequent absences each lower your course grade by a full letter grade. Please Note: 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.

**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. Please see me as early as possible if you are having difficulty with your studies.

**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 Canvas site and post an announcement on Canvas. Be sure you are checking your university email account regularly.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Call 911 in the event of an emergency. Call the UO Police Department (541) 346-2919 for non-emergency assistance. 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).

**Academic Honesty:** If you are having difficulty with an assignment, please be in touch with me rather than seek inappropriate source material for an assignment. 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://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/plagiarism> for a definition and examples of plagiarism and the library guides to citing sources, <http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/whycite>. 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.

**Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Reporting:** Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources

and help at [safe.uoregon.edu](https://safe.uoregon.edu). To get help by phone, a student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university.

Students experiencing any other form of prohibited discrimination or harassment can find information at [respect.uoregon.edu](https://respect.uoregon.edu) or [aaeo.uoregon.edu](https://aaeo.uoregon.edu) or contact the non-confidential AAEO office at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, additional information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment unrelated to sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment is available at [Discrimination & Harassment](#).

Specific details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees can be found at [titleix.uoregon.edu](https://titleix.uoregon.edu).

**Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse:** UO employees, including faculty, staff, and GEs, are mandatory reporters of child abuse. This statement is to advise you that your disclosure of information about child abuse to a UO employee may trigger the UO employee's duty to report that information to the designated authorities. Please refer to the following links for detailed information about mandatory reporting: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

**Diversity:** It is the policy of the University of Oregon to support and value diversity. To do so requires that we engage in these practices:

- Respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals, regardless of national origin or citizen status.
- Promote a culture of respect throughout the university community.
- Respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others.
- Reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind.
- Practice personal and academic integrity, and expect it from others.
- Promote the diversity of opinions, ideas, and backgrounds, which is the lifeblood of the university.