

## English 125-064

Language, Logic and Information: Using Mathematics to Understand  
Writing, Communication and Argument

Fall 2013

MW 2.30-4

School of Education 2334

**Instructor:** Rafe Kinsey<sup>1</sup>

**Email** rkinsey@umich.edu<sup>2</sup>

**Website:** <http://english125.rafekinsey.com><sup>3</sup>

**Office Hours:** M 1.30-2.30, W 4-5 *or* by appointment (see below)

**Office:** East Hall 5832<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Please feel free to call me by my first name. (FYI, it's pronounced to rhyme with "safe.")

<sup>2</sup> Please put "English 125" in the subject line and use your *umich.edu* email address.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that this, rather than CTools, is the primary website for the course. The website will list the calendar for the course, including all assignments and dates. Certain password-protected readings will be put in CTools, but they will be linked to from the main site.

<sup>4</sup> Make sure to take the stairways or elevators in the math side of the building (closest to South University); if you're on the psych side of the building, you will not be able to get to the part of the fifth floor where my office is. My office phone number is 734-763-2518; you can use this if for some reason you can't get into the building while coming to office hours, but otherwise use email for any messages.

### *EDWP-wide Course Description for English 125*

*This class is about writing and academic inquiry. Good arguments stem from good questions, and academic essays allow writers to write their way toward answers, toward figuring out what they think. In this course, students focus on the creation of complex, analytic, well-supported arguments addressing questions that matter in academic contexts. The course also hones students' critical thinking and reading skills. Working closely with their peers and the instructor, students develop their essays through workshops and extensive revision and editing. Readings cover a variety of genres and often serve as models or prompts for assigned essays. The specific questions that students pursue in essays are guided by their own interests.*

### *Specific Course Description for This Section of English 125*

This course has an audacious goal: we're going to learn a bit of pure mathematics and then apply what we've learned to understand language and writing. We'll begin with an introduction to *pure* math: the beauty of proofs and abstraction, not the rote calculations of high school. Some of the things we'll study will be logic, set theory, recursions, and algorithms. (Don't worry if you haven't seen these before!) The math will then lead us into theoretical linguistics, the scientific study of language. Finally, we'll use our knowledge of math and theoretical linguistics to think about writing itself, in particular how to write (and argue, and think) effectively. For example, we'll see how Venn diagrams, from set theory, are used in linguistic semantics, the study of meaning, to explain precisely when there should and shouldn't be a comma before "which."

Throughout, we'll be motivated by the premise that mathematical thinking is crucial in understanding much of the world, not only in the linguistics we'll be focusing on, but also in economics, computer science, music, medicine, sports, political science, and many other

areas. (Indeed, an unofficial title for the course that represents this philosophy is “Math, Writing, and the World.”) There will be lots of writing, in many different forms, throughout the semester, but we’ll focus on a final project where you will get the opportunity to choose, study and then write about some interesting application of mathematical thinking to the world.

### *Some Themes and Goals*

We’re going to be bringing together ideas from a lot of disciplines in this course. More than any one single specific content area or idea, this course is about teaching you a certain way of thinking, an approach that ties together perspectives from math and linguistics but applies and exists far more broadly.

I’m going to try throughout the course to emphasize the unity of the topics we’re covering, even as we hop between different fields. Here are some of the basic themes that I want to impart:

- *Abstraction* is one of the most powerful intellectual tools we have. It’s sometimes easiest to see abstraction within mathematics, so we’ll start there, but we’ll go on to explore its power in a variety of fields.
- *Logic and argument* are incredibly important. Why do we know whether something is true? How do we make that argument? What sorts of reasoning are required to convince us?
- So much of what we do is *algorithmic*: there is some process that we can describe abstractly that captures what we’re doing. Certainly this is crucial in our technological world, but we’ll see algorithms elsewhere, from making bibliographies to the way our brains parse sentences as we read.
- We need to *communicate* our ideas, and we usually do so through *language*. How best can we accomplish this communication? More specifically, how does our language work? How can we write effectively?

This last point is key: this is a *writing course*. We’ll be doing lots and lots of writing, both informally and formally, and we’ll be talking a lot about how to write effectively in college and beyond. A fundamental premise of the course is that the math and linguistics we’re going to learn can shed light on how to write effectively, and what we learn about these and other topics will provide the content for our papers, but much of the course will consist of writing instruction as in any other English 125 section.

One other unity among the various topics we're covering is *beauty*. The philosopher and logician Bertrand Russell wrote:

Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of painting or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show. The true spirit of delight, the exaltation, the sense of being more than Man, which is the touchstone of the highest excellence, is to be found in mathematics as surely as poetry.

Throughout this course, I'm going to try to instill an appreciation for the aesthetic: from this cold and austere beauty of mathematics, to the elegance of the linguistic analyses we will undertake, to the sublime beauty of great writing.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to being a course about writing, this course also serves in many ways as an *introduction to college*.<sup>6</sup> You're incredibly lucky to be able to spend the next four years at this great university. The college experience will give you many opportunities, but it will undoubtedly be a change and a challenge at first. Part of my role as your instructor in this course is to help guide you in your first months in college, helping you feel comfortable with the academic expectations placed on you.<sup>7</sup>

### Readings

The only way to learn to write is to read—not just read, but read a lot, and read quality writing.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we will do lots of reading in this course. There will be several types of materials:

- Most of the required readings will be articles (and the occasional excerpts from books). I'll make these readings available to you through the website.
- Some of the readings will be designed to teach you specific concepts from math and linguistics. For some of the basic material on logic and pure mathematics, we'll be using Keith Devlin's textbook *Introduction to Mathematical Thinking* (ISBN 0615653634).<sup>9</sup> This thin book is quite inexpensive; it's available for under \$10 from Amazon. You're required to buy the copy; please make sure to get it ASAP, since we'll start using it next week. For other material, I will provide lecture notes/handouts to supplement the in-class discussions. These will be made available in class and/or on the website.<sup>10</sup> For the readings that help you understand mathematics and linguistics content—whether they're by Devlin, other people or me—it will often make sense to read these both *before* the class we learn the material and again *after*.

<sup>5</sup> This is why, for next class, I'm assigning you to read two short pieces about beauty: an excerpt on mathematical beauty from the G.H. Hardy's classic *A Mathematician's Apology* and an essay by the novelist James Salter about language.

<sup>6</sup> Or at least the academic part of college.

<sup>7</sup> An important aspect of this is helping you to begin to *learn independently*. Few skills are more useful in the world than being able to teach yourself something, so we're going to work hard at developing this skill. Therefore, rather than "holding your hand," as high school or some college classes will do, I'm going to gradually encourage you to learn things on your own, with me serving more as a guide and a mentor than an instructor. (I'll give you the secret now: the key to this is learning to read effectively!)

<sup>8</sup> A good quote: "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body." Richard Steele 1671-1729.

<sup>9</sup> Devlin wrote this textbook for a MOOC ("massively online open course") he has taught through Coursera. The course is freely available online at [coursera.org/course/maththink/](https://coursera.org/course/maththink/). You're welcome to take a look at it—you might find it useful to look at his videotaped lectures—but this isn't at all required.

<sup>10</sup> Obviously, you should read anything I hand out to you, even if I don't explicitly say so.

- In addition to the required readings and the Devlin textbook, you'll be encouraged to explore other resources. In particular, you should take advantage of the wonderful library system. I'll give suggestions of books for you to consult, but finding books and resources on your own is an important skill. Therefore, I will also encourage you to browse and explore on your own within the library.<sup>11</sup>
- For your final project, you will have to do some research on your own and find your own sources. This is an important skill, and I'll help you figure this out!
- Finally, you'll be required to read *outside of the official syllabus for the course*. As I said—I'm repeating myself, but this is okay, because you can't hear this fact often enough—if you want to write well, you need to read a lot. Therefore, I'll be asking you to do a certain amount of quality *extramural*<sup>12</sup> reading outside of class readings each week. I'll give you suggestions of some great sources—for example, the *New Yorker* and *Slate*—but you'll have a lot of freedom to follow your own interests. We'll incorporate these readings in various assignments, mostly in the form of reading response emails you'll send to me, discussing what you've read. More about this soon!

Please note that there's no official coursepack, and you're only required to buy the Devlin textbook.<sup>13</sup> *I will be requiring that you print out each of the required readings in the syllabus and bring it to class on the day it's discussed.* By not having a coursepack (and having only one, inexpensive book), I'm saving you money, but it's important that you print things out. Even though we live in a technological age, it's important that you feel comfortable reading printed copies, with a pen in hand.<sup>14</sup> *Not bringing the printed required readings in to class will jeopardize your grade.*

### *Is this course right for you? Background, Expectations, and Workload*

The premise of the course is that mathematical thinking both can and should be taught to a much wider range of people than those who specialize in math, so the course is designed to appeal to students with a variety of backgrounds, including those of you without as much experience in math. (If you do have extensive background, don't worry—you're still encouraged to take the course; there will be many interesting and challenging ideas that will complement your other math courses well.) Even if you didn't like math in high school, you might still like this course, since the type of stuff we'll be doing is very different.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, if the stuff we're going to do

<sup>11</sup> You don't have to be literally "on your own," of course. Yet another important skill to learn in college is how to get advice and suggestions from people. In addition to me, you can also ask classmates, friends, other professors or GSIs, librarians, and more for suggestions!

<sup>12</sup> *extramural*: (1) outside the walls or boundaries of a town, college, or institution; (2) additional to one's work or course of study and typically not connected with it. (From the Latin *extras muros* "outside the walls".)

<sup>13</sup> If this were 15 years ago, I would require you to buy a dictionary, but now you have easy access to good dictionaries online. Make sure to use these! Any of the major publishers—Oxford, American Heritage, Merriam Webster—are fine.

<sup>14</sup> We'll talk about effective reading and note-taking strategies early on in the course.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, even though we're doing lots of math, we'll almost never see any numbers!

this semester doesn't sound appealing, then this course doesn't make sense for you.

The two things this course does require are *intellectual curiosity* and *a willingness to work hard*.

You're lucky to be studying at one of the great universities of the world, full of opportunities in almost any intellectual arena imaginable. I hope this excites you—it should. If it does, this course will be a great fit; if not, it probably won't. (Don't worry, it's fine if some of the intellectual possibilities here at Michigan are daunting or intimidating. As I said, part of the purpose of the course is to help you feel comfortable within this university environment.)

We're going to work hard in this course. Even though we meet only three hours a week, this is a four-credit course, which means that you're expected to spend a significant amount of time working outside of class.<sup>16</sup> After all, the only way to learn to write is with lots of practice, which we're certainly going to do. This class will be very rewarding to those of you who work hard, but if you're not willing to do this, you should drop this section.

*Writing Background:* This course fulfills the UM first-year writing requirement. If you feel that you don't have a strong enough background in academic writing to succeed in this course, you might consider some of the alternative courses the Sweetland Center for Writing offers instead: Writing 100, a two-credit course that helps students transition to the college-level writing in English 125 courses like this, and Writing 120, a course for multilingual speakers who don't have as much experience writing in English.

If you're not sure about whether this course makes sense for any of these reasons, *please come and talk to me ASAP!* Talk to me before or after class, come to my office hours, or email me to arrange a time; I'd be happy to talk with you about this.

### Communication

Email is the best way to reach me. I check my email regularly, and am good at getting back to you.<sup>17</sup> Feel free to email me not just about logistics (e.g., scheduling appointments), but also about substantive issues around class content; I'm happy to engage in such discussions over email.

In turn, I will be using email to communicate with you. Therefore, you should make sure to check your *umich.edu* email address regularly. Also, please use your *umich.edu* address when corresponding with me, and put "English 125" in your subject.

*A Note on Email Etiquette.* Figuring out the appropriate norms for email correspondence is an important skill both in college and in the

<sup>16</sup> From the official LSA Policy: students are expected to spend 3 hours of work outside of class for each hour in class. Since this is a 4-credit course, this means you should expect to spend 12 hours a week *outside of class* on this course. (That's not even counting the fourth credit hour, which we don't hold in class. So, really, a four-credit course should be  $4 \cdot (1 + 3) = 16$  hours a week, but since we only spend 3 hours a week you should be spending 13 hours a week outside of class!)

<sup>17</sup> Let me be a bit more precise about what this means. We'll be talking during the semester about productivity, including the role the internet plays in distracting us and decreasing our efficiency. I, like many of us, probably check my email too often, so, to guard my productivity, I try to set boundaries. When I say regularly, I mean I'll almost always read your email within 24 hours, probably much sooner than that. I'll usually respond within 24-36 hours if a response is necessary, although sometimes it will be easier to discuss the matter in person, and I'll ask you to come and talk to me in office hours or after class. One thing this response timeframe means is that if you send me an email at midnight the night before an assignment is due, you might not get a response before it's too late.

real world. (Also, it's part of the crucial task in any writing of determining who your *audience* is, something we'll be talking about a lot this semester.) As you will soon see, I run my classes in a relatively informal manner—as I said, I want to be on a first-name basis with everyone. Still, I expect that your emails be appropriately polished. In part this is because this is my personal preference, but it's also because this is a writing course, so your emails are writing opportunities that you should take seriously. What does “appropriately polished” mean? At the very least, it means that your emails should be appropriately punctuated and carefully proofread. The specific context of the email matters. If there's an occasional stray typo in an email telling me you're sick, that's not a big deal—I'm sure I'll make a typo or two in the emails I send you—but if your reading response or other more formal emails aren't carefully polished, that's a problem.

You'll discover in college and beyond—this certainly matters in the real world—that people have a wide range of expectations for email. I've seen English professors who write only in lower-case, and professors who'd take affront at emails not properly addressed and signed. Navigating these issues is important; when in doubt, it's always best to err on the side of caution.

### *Office Hours*

One of the wonderful things about college is office hours. This is time that your instructors have reserved *for you!* You should feel free to come to my office hours. We can talk about a specific thing you're struggling with, we can brainstorm ideas for your paper, we can continue a discussion from class about an exciting idea, and so on. If you can't make my scheduled office hours, you're welcome to email me (or ask me before/after class) and we can schedule an appointment.<sup>18</sup>

A word of advice: you should learn to take advantage of office hours throughout your experience here at the university. At such a big place, it's easy to get lost in the crowd, so you have to take initiative to get to know professors. Office hours are a great way to do this.<sup>19</sup>

We'll also have scheduled individual conferences to discuss your writing. I'll be talking about this later in the semester. Don't think, though, that you can only discuss your writing in this conference; office hours are designed for this!

<sup>18</sup> When emailing me to schedule an appointment, please send me a list of all the times you are free to meet.

<sup>19</sup> I'd especially encourage you to get to know *professors*—i.e., members of the tenure-track faculty. Universities like Michigan have several different types of instructors. I'm a *graduate student instructor*, or GSI; I'm a Ph.D. student in the math department. You'll have many GSIs here at Michigan, and you're likely also to have some *lecturers*, who usually have Ph.D.s but aren't eligible for tenure. The core of the university are the *tenure-track* faculty: assistant, associate, and full professors. There are many wonderful GSIs and lecturers (and there are some not-so-wonderful professors), but it's good idea to try to take courses with professors, and to try to get to know them. This is especially true if you're interested in going to graduate school, since letters of recommendation from professors hold much more sway.

## Feedback

The reason I'm teaching this course is to help you learn. To help me do this job as well as I can, please give me feedback about how the course is going. What makes sense? What's confusing? What should we spend more time on? What topics are exciting you? Please let me know—before or after class, in office hours, or by email—if you have any feedback. I'll take an opportunity a few times in the semester to ask for more anonymous feedback, but you can also leave anonymous suggestions by leaving a note in my mailbox on the second floor of East Hall.

I'm especially eager for feedback because the approach I'm taking is somewhat experimental: we're doing something unusual by seeing if we can apply math and linguistics to think about writing.<sup>20</sup> I've carefully planned out the schedule and the syllabus for the semester, but I've left some flexibility so that I can adjust things based on what's best for the class.<sup>21</sup> So please let me know!

## Assignments and Grading

There will be a wide range of assignments in this course, ranging from shorter writings and a few math and linguistics exercises to a substantial final project. You can see a rough list of these assignments on the website.<sup>22</sup> I've tried to schedule things so that there's a relatively even amount of work from week-to-week; even when there isn't a major writing assignment due, we'll be in the process of revisions and there will be more informal writing assignments, not to mention reading and other activities.

Grades will be determined *approximately* as follows:

- 20% shorter assignments (including short writings, your extramural readings with responses, and a few miscellaneous math and linguistics homework assignments)
- 5% paper explaining a mathematical proof
- 10% paper summarizing an article
- 10% paper about a prescriptive rule
- 15% paper about an article with a logical mistake
- 25% final project
- 15% engagement (see below)

Learning to write takes time, so it strikes me as both cruel and pedagogically misguided to overemphasize grades early on, rather

<sup>20</sup> I hope this excites you! (If it doesn't, maybe this isn't the right class for you.)

<sup>21</sup> That's part of the reason why I haven't included a full calendar here. You can see a tentative calendar for the rest of the semester on the website, as well as a set-in-stone official calendar for the next week or two.

<sup>22</sup> Please note that some of these might change slightly. I'll give you plenty of advance warning for any major assignments.

than focusing on your development as writers. For that reason, I'm not going to give you letter grades on your papers and assignments when I hand them back. Instead, what I'm going to do is the following.

- For each assignment, I'll give you feedback, but rather than giving you a grade, I'll offer qualitative comments, trying to let you know what you did well and what you can work on.
- About halfway through the semester, I'll write and give you a "midterm review." Again, most of the focus will be on helping you to continue to grow intellectually, but I will try to give you a sense of approximately where you currently stand in terms of grades.

I realize that this sort of a system might provoke pangs of anxiety in you. It wasn't that long ago that I was in your shoes; I remember how worried I was about grades. For this reason, I'll be happy to meet with you individually at any time during the semester, to discuss in more detail where you stand with your grades. But I hope this system can help you focus, for the bulk of the semester, instead on what you are learning and how you are growing intellectually and as a writer.

Let me make a few comments on grades. First, I should make clear that, even though this course has a mathematical component, the grading won't give students with serious math backgrounds an unfair advantage. Most of the evaluation for the course will be based on your *writing* projects, and on how well you grapple with the ideas we discuss. Second, I'd like to emphasize that the breakdown above is only approximate; a student who writes C papers early on but then works hard and writes A papers in the end might get better than a B.<sup>23</sup> Third, I want everyone to realize that this class is not graded on a curve: there's no set number of each letter grade that I have to give out, so don't think you're competing against your classmates. Finally, I should note that standards in college courses are different from high school.<sup>24</sup> You're part of an intellectual community, and I want—I expect—you to aspire to the high standards of serious academic writing. This might not be easy at first, but we're going to work hard and strive towards this goal, by reading great writing, by thinking a lot about language and ideas, and by working hard on our own writing.

<sup>23</sup> This does *not* mean that your grade is based primarily on improvement; slacking off on the first assignment to trick me won't help you!

<sup>24</sup> The official guidelines call for giving As to exceptional work, Bs for good work, Cs for average work, Ds for unsatisfactory work, and Es for failure.

### *Engagement*

Many classes have a "participation" grade. I prefer to call this *engagement* since that term better captures what I'm looking for: signs that



you're *engaged* with the class and the material. This can be shown many ways—by discussions in class (both talking *and* actively listening), talking to me in office hours, sending me ideas and questions by email, working together with classmates in peer revisions and group-work. For those of you who are shy about speaking up in class, you'll see that class discussions are far from the only way to show engagement. Still, you should come and talk to me about how to develop the confidence to speak in class, since it's a crucial skill in college and the real world.

I should emphasize that showing engagement is about *quality* not *quantity*. Monopolizing the classroom discussion, sending me 50 emails a day, or sitting in on absolutely every office hour in an attempt to get a good engagement grade will almost surely backfire; it's important to understand the appropriate decorum in the university environment. None of this, of course, is to say that you shouldn't passionately engage in class, office hours or emails; my point is it's pretty clear if you're doing things for grade-grubbing, and it won't work.

You should feel comfortable asking questions in class. Don't be afraid of asking stupid questions!<sup>25</sup> A particular case: if there's a word mentioned in class or the readings that you don't know—or you've heard it, but aren't sure of the meaning or pronunciation—it's *always okay* to interrupt me and ask. *Don't be embarrassed*; I do this all the time. I will be happy to answer it—and often I'll look it up (or ask someone else to look it up), because it never hurts to see a definition again.

<sup>25</sup> See the essay "Ask yourself dumb questions" by Terry Tao, arguably the most important mathematician alive. (Click on the link above, go to <http://wp.me/P3qzP-10> or google it.)

### *Attendance Policy*

Because this is a small, interactive seminar, and especially because we'll be covering material in class from an unusual perspective that isn't easily found in textbooks, attendance in class is mandatory. What this means is that, unless there's a very good reason, you should be in class every day. Of course, occasionally life gets in the way and you might have to miss a class; if this happens, you should email me *ahead of time* to let me know.<sup>26</sup> It is then *your responsibility* to contact other students in the class to learn what we covered and catch up. (Note that time to make up for a missed class will be significantly more than if you'd gone to the class.)

<sup>26</sup> Of course, there are rare emergencies where you might not be able to contact me ahead of time.

Missing more than two classes, except in extenuating circumstances, will seriously affect your grade: I may lower your final grade by as much as one letter grade for additional unexcused absences. Five absences can result in failure for the course unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances.

I will excuse absences for the following reasons, with appropriate documentation:

*Sickness:* Please take care of yourself; it's easy to get sick with all of the excitement of college. If you do get sick, please be in touch with me, and stay home if you're contagious. We'll work things out; what's most important is that you get better and everyone else stays healthy.

*Family Emergencies:* If this happens, please be in touch with me as soon as possible, so that we can work things out.

*Sports and University Business:* If you have to miss class due to *official* university business, we will work things out. You are responsible for alerting me *as soon as possible* of your schedule, and of arranging to make up any material you have missed.

### *Submitting Assignments and Late Work Policy*

Most assignments will be submitted to me online, by email. I'll give precise details in the assignments.

One of the important skills in college is learning how to manage your time and handle deadlines. In particular, it's crucial that you learn to work well ahead of deadlines, rather than rushing to finish things the night before. Once you leave college and enter the real world, it's particularly important to be responsible: would you hire someone who's always asking for extensions?

That said, I understand that college, especially freshman year, can be a hectic and stressful experience. To give you a bit of flexibility, I'll give you three free "late days,"<sup>27</sup> to be used as you wish over the course of the semester for writing assignments handed to me. You may split these late-days up—e.g., you can use two late-days on one assignment, and one on another<sup>28</sup>—but to use a late day you have to email me by the regular deadline, to let me know you're using the late day. (Please note that if you use a late day on a paper, I might not return it as quickly.)

There are two exceptions to this rule. First, because we can't do peer-review if your draft isn't ready, you *can't* use a late-day for due dates for peer review. Second, you can't use these late-days for math or linguistics exercises, because if you do that you'll get behind.

In extenuating circumstances—if you are sick, if there's a family emergency, etc.—you should contact me *as soon as possible*, and we can work out alternatives.<sup>29</sup>

### *Groupwork and Peer Review*

We'll be doing lots of different forms of groupwork in class. I'm doing this because working with others helps you learn and because,

<sup>27</sup> A "day" means a 24-hour period *not* a class day.

<sup>28</sup> You can't split into half-days!

<sup>29</sup> That is, depending on the circumstances, you won't necessarily have to use those late days.

in the real world, you'll be expected to work in teams all the team. We'll work together both as we try to learn the technical material in math and linguistics, and also as we edit each other's writings.

During the semester, you will be expected to meet together with (varying) assigned partners outside of class.

### *Classroom Behavior and Use of Technology*

You'll see that the norms in college are different than those of high school. You're adults now; I and other instructors will treat you that way. It's important to learn how to interact in this world. (You can think about it pragmatically: how is your behavior going to affect your instructors' perceptions of you? What are your future employers going to think of you?)

Two specific notes:

(1) Technology. Technology is tremendously useful, but also extremely distracting. With a few exceptions—for example, if I ask someone to look something up—we won't need laptops in class. (Remember, I expect you to print out paper copies of your readings.) *Cell phone use is prohibited in class; inappropriate use of your cell phone, as with other inappropriate behavior, will seriously jeopardize your engagement grade.* Of course, computers will be essential for your work outside of class; if you do not have your own computer, the university has several computer labs open 24/7, as well as numerous computers throughout the libraries.

(2) Tardiness. Of course, occasionally something happens and you might have to be slightly late, but if this happens consistently, it will affect your engagement grade.

### *Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy*

*The University of Michigan defines plagiarism as "Submitting a piece of work (for example, an essay, research paper, work of art, assignment, laboratory report) which in part or in whole is not entirely the student's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source." Plagiarism is when you knowingly (or unknowingly) submit someone else's ideas or words as your own. Please review the "Memo to all students taking courses in the English Department" from the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. You can find it at:*

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>

*If you commit an act of academic dishonesty in this course either by plagiarizing someone's work or by allowing your own work to be misused by another, you will fail the assignment and may fail the entire course. In addition, I will report the incident to both the English Department and the*

*LS&A Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. Please note that if you submit work already completed for one course as original work for another course, you are violating university policies and will fail the assignment and possibly the course.*

That's the official language I'm required to use. I want to emphasize that this is a very important issue; I treat issues of academic integrity seriously, and have reported students in the past for cheating. But I understand that there are complications and subtleties around plagiarism that you might not be familiar with. We'll be talking a lot about appropriate use of sources and related topics during the course. When in doubt, please talk to me; communication is the key.

### *University Resources*

There are many resources here to help you succeed, both in this course and in all aspects of your academic and personal life.<sup>30</sup>

- Me—I'm here to help you in this course, so please be comfortable talking to me. For other issues not related to the course, I can direct you to university resources that can help you, so feel free to ask.
- The Sweetland Center for Writing in North Quad has many resources available to help you with writing, including free individual tutoring appointments.
- The University Library system has a wealth of riches for you to explore and enjoy. Throughout the course, I'll be helping you discover these.
- The Newnan Advising Center can help you with general academic difficulties.
- The many *informal* support structures you have: friends, family members, GSIs, professors, friends and staff in your residence halls.
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), located in the Union, can help if you're dealing with stress or other mental health issues. They also have many free resources that can help you be well and stay healthy, including yoga and meditation classes and a wellness zone with massage chairs, an xbox system, and more.

<sup>30</sup> I've listed some more resources on the course website, in the links section.

### *Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

*If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know. I can modify some aspects of the assignments, in-class activities, and teaching*

*methods to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat as private and confidential any information that you provide.*

Let me add to that official language above: Please let me know *as soon as possible*. According to the SSD website: “Students should speak with their instructors before or during the first week of classes regarding any special needs.”

### *Religious Observances*

*If a class session or due date conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me so that we can make alternative arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence. In accordance with U-M policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.*

Let me add to that official English department language above: Let me know *as soon as possible* if there are any conflicts, so that we can work out an appropriate solution. Note, in particular: “It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Such notice must be given by the drop/add deadline of the given term.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> From the official policy:  
[www.lsa.umich.edu/students/dean/holidays](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/students/dean/holidays)