Freshman Composition

If you are taking Freshman Composition (English 1310 and English 1320), then you are developing writing techniques that you can use in your other college courses. In both courses, you’ll focus on writing and revision—lots of revision.

Part of your goal is to carefully read and examine your writing in order to improve your technique. To do this, you’ll learn about and use key rhetorical concepts in your writing. Simply put, rhetoric is the art of using language, whether we’re using it in writing or in our everyday speech. Rhetoric exists all day every day, from a billboard, to a bumper sticker, to a tattoo. All of these items deliver a sort of message; the effectiveness of the message has the potential to persuade us to see things differently or to acknowledge that a different viewpoint is a viable option. Once you understand the terminology you’re using in the course, you’ll find it quite useful because you’ll be able to turn that terminology into effective rhetorical tools you can use over and over, both in your coursework and in the future when you enter the workforce.

The concept of rhetoric comes from the ancient Greeks, a civilization that members of Western civilization have looked to because of its sophisticated modes of living, learning, and governing themselves. Many of our other modern ideas are taken from Greek models, including our judicial system and the modern Olympic games. The rhetorical concepts you’ll use in English 1310 and 1320 come from the Greek ideas of effective written and oral communication. Modern writers still use and value these ancient concepts because they work so well.

Format and Length Requirements for Your Papers
Your papers in both English 1310 and English 1320 will be short. In fact, you’ll probably be limited to writing two pages. You’ll be asked to use single-spaced Times New Roman typeface in a 10-point font. This is intended to help both you and your instructor to focus on revision rather than on length. Once again, you will
- Limit your paper to two pages
  (You’ll turn in one page with printing on the front and on the back.)
- Single-space
- Use Times New Roman in a 10-point font

In this handout, we’ll explain the basic premise of the papers you’ll write in English 1310 and English 1320. We’ll conclude with a brief definition of many of the important terms you’ll use in these courses.
English 1310

Your instructor may choose to vary the content somewhat, but you can expect the following types of assignments in English 1310.

Argument Description
In this assignment, you’ll choose an essay from the readings you’ve done for class and describe how the writer developed his or her argument. Keep in mind that in rhetorical terms, an argument is a stance rather than a disagreement. In this assignment you will
- Describe how the writer developed his or her argument
- Identify the main argument of the piece
- Examine what types of proof the writer uses to justify his or her claims
- Look at the writer’s use of language and how it impacts the piece

Argumentative Analysis
Using a piece you’ve read for class, you will evaluate an ethical issue the writer raises in the piece. An ethical issue means something we think of as being right or wrong behavior. In this assignment you will
- Describe the ethical problem in detail
- Identify the harmful or helpful consequences that could occur if the intended audience acts in accordance with the writer’s argument
- Cite passages from the piece to support your claims
- Analyze and support your claims; that is, make sure you’ve clearly explained why you view the issue as you do
- Think about potential counterarguments. In other words, think about what types of objections might readers have to your argument
- Write a conclusion that includes a plan for responding to the ethical issue

Argument Revision
Becoming a better writer is dependent on your ability to understand the rhetorical strategies you use in your papers and then to use those strategies to revise and improve your paper. Towards this end, you’ll write a revision memo for each paper. When you write a revision memo, your goal is to think critically about the rhetorical strategies you’ve used and how well you used them. Consult with your instructor on the format for this memo. When you write the revision memo you should
- Begin with an Executive Summary. In this summary, you’ll reflect on your instructor’s comments and how you can use them to improve the effectiveness of your writing
- Respond in writing to the questions your instructor has asked
- Explain your specific plans for revising your work
- Ask your instructor specific questions about areas you need help to improve
Collaborative Single-Work Interview
This assignment is designed to help you develop effective strategies for close reading and collaborating with a group of your fellow students. You’ll use these skills to interview our invited guest lecturer in the spring semester.

Writing Portfolio
During the semester, you’ll compile a portfolio of your work. Your final portfolio will contain the best examples of your work in English 1310. Thus, it becomes a record of your growth as a writer. You’ll need to check with your instructor to see how he or she wants you to arrange and turn in the portfolio. Most likely, your instructor will also want you to write some kind of account of what’s in your portfolio. In this account, you will most likely
- Demonstrate your writing progress throughout the semester
- Evaluate your choices in your revisions
- Point to evidence of your growth as a writer during the semester
- Include an artifact, or example, of the writing you’ve done in this class
- Identify opportunities for continued growth as a writer
English 1320
Your instructor may choose to vary the content somewhat, but you can expect
the following types of assignments in English 1320. You may notice a
significant amount of overlap between English 1310 and English 1320. This is
intentional—the second course helps you refine and improve the skills and
techniques you learned in the first course. True writing mastery comes from
repeated practice.

Argument Description
In this assignment, you’ll create an annotated bibliography of at least five
academic sources on a research topic wherein you address an ethical problem.
For this annotated bibliography, you
- May use one essay from the textbook for this course
- Must do research to find the other four academic sources
- Consult with your instructor about the format and length requirements

Argument Synthesis
In this assignment, you’ll build on the work you completed for your Argument
Description. Depending on your instructor’s comments on that assignment,
you may need to gather additional academic sources to support your
argument. As you write your Argument Synthesis,
- You must identify and describe a common ethical issue between each of
  the academic sources you consulted
- You must analyze the ethical issue, using your academic sources to
  support your claims
- You must plan steps in response to the ethical issue
- You will then justify your planned steps, accounting for the perspectives
  represented in each of the academic sources you consulted
- You must look at the potential consequences of your planned steps
- You must look at possible counterarguments

Argument Revision
Just as you did in English 1310, you’ll write a revision memo, addressing your
instructor’s comments and revising the content and mechanics of your paper to
produce a more sophisticated, polished piece of writing. You’ll submit a final
revised version of your essay in the final portfolio.

Argument Analysis, Synthesis, and Revision
In this assignment, you’ll work with two of your classmates to develop a set of
interview questions for our invited guest lecturer. You and your classmates will
use either both of the novels packaged with your textbook, or you will use one
of the novels and one academic source from your research project. You’ll want
to look for compelling passages, prominent themes, and interesting issues.
Writing Portfolio
Your portfolio for this assignment will include
- A revision of your annotated bibliography
- A revision of your research essay
- A copy of the collaborative interview project
- A portfolio Executive Summary
- At least three additional pieces of writing that show how you have grown as a writer during the semester
Works Cited
