Sophomore English Composition Course
The Fall Semester of 2009
(A Tentative Syllabus)

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NOTE: It is very probable that I will take a research leave in the spring term of the current academic year (i.e.—from February to June in 2010). Another teacher will take over the teaching position of this course.

II. Class Hours:
10: 10 ~ 12: 00 every Tuesday and 9: 10 ~ 10: 00 every Thursday. However, we may not have in-class session at each Thursday class hour; that is, you may not have to show up for class every Thursday. Instead, each of you may have to show up for 10 or 15-minute one-on-one talks with me about your composition assignments on a Monday after I review them (This is the so-called “conference hour”).

III. Textbook:
1. The textbook we will use for the whole school year is Writing with a Thesis. You should order the book from the Kaohsiung Branch of the Bookman bookstore (高雄書林書局, 07-229-0300, contacting a lady called 陳心怡. You may like to order copies of the book as a group to get a discount.
2. There is no such thing as a “perfect” textbook, catering to the needs of students of widely diverse backgrounds and capabilities. The one I choose, for example, is actually designed for ENL (English for Native Language) students; the sample essays, therefore, are probably not very good models for you to follow closely. However, these sample essays are suitable materials for analyses of writing techniques. Besides, this book contains in each chapter a very clear guideline and many good instructions and warnings about how to write well according to a particular pattern of composition. Supplement materials, therefore, are required to provide adequate model compositions and in-class exercises. The primary source of these materials should be a textbook called Great Essays, which is available at the Tainan Branch of the Caves Books (台南敦煌書局). You DON’T need to buy this book; I will use printouts from the book, anyway.

IV. Schedules:
Because it is very difficult to do all class activities according to a schedule, I won’t give specific information about what to do on which day. At the present moment I will divide the semester into five parts, each for the specific task we have to perform:

1. Introduction to Essay Writing: How to come up with a subject and turn it into an effective thesis, how to organize an essay, etc, covering roughly Chapter 1 and Weeks 1 ~2
2. Narration: covering roughly Chapter 2 and Weeks 3~6
3. Description: covering roughly Chapter 3 and Weeks 7~10
4. Examples: covering roughly Chapter 4 and Weeks 11~14
5. Process: covering roughly Chapter 5 and Weeks 15~18

V. Class Proceeding:
1. A para-writing approach or a pattern of essay writing is introduced to you first with my discussion of the PRINCIPLES concerned. Then exemplar cases or model essays of the pattern are analyzed, line by line or paragraph by paragraph, to demonstrate how the principles are applied.
2. If possible, some exercises related to the pattern of writing in question will be assigned to you to do them at home. The results have to be turned in for grading. If I find that you do not even have a clear sense of the mechanism of paragraph writing, I will discuss the paragraph mode of the writing pattern and ask you to write a paragraph before you go on to the essay mode.
3. A group of students (roughly five in number) will be assigned an example article from the text book for doing an oral report on it. The oral report should address the questions attached to the article, concerning how the principles discussed about the writing pattern are applied to the example essay.
4. Now you will be asked to try your hand at writing an essay according to the pattern. Assignments will be announced one week ahead of deadlines, usually on a Tuesday. Two copies of the first drafts should be turned in on time, one left unsigned for peer review; a digital copy of the draft should also be sent to me at the course webpage— http://moodle.ncku.edu.tw/ The peer review comments, in two copies, should be turned in on Friday, after the English Literature class on Friday.
5. Next, in the conference for the assignment, both copies of your composition, one corrected and commented by me and the other by an anonymous peer, will be returned to you with my and his/her suggestions for revision. Besides, the peer comment you do on another’s composition will be briefly discussed and evaluated as well. (I have to confess that the time arrangement and procedure of this system of turning in and reviewing assignments are a tentative arrangement. Changes are very probable after we go on to the real work.)
6. You may or may not be asked to revise your assignment after it commented and corrected. If you are required to turn in your revision (or if you simply want to revise it even though I don’t request it), the final version of your composition should be turned in at next session, revised according to my and the peer’s suggestions. The scores for both the first and final versions of your composition will be recorded and become part of your semester score.
7. Sometimes examples of problems in your compositions will be brought up and discussed openly in class. Don’t take it as a personal affront because your identity will not be revealed.

VI. Requirements:
1. Your job consists primarily in doing exercises, doing group oral presentations on sample essays, writing/revising your own compositions, and reviewing your peers’ compositions. In order to ensure the smooth functioning of the peer review system, your assignments have to be turned in ON TIME. Late submissions will NOT be accepted; you’ve got to make sure not to cross the deadlines.
2. All compositions and most exercises turned in should be printed out by computers. No handwritten compositions are accepted. Besides, the turned-in assignments should conform to the standard format: that is, on A4-size sheet, one-inch margin, 1.5 or double space between lines, and Times New Roman 12 font.

3. Of course the length of a paragraph or essay assignment will vary. However, a paragraph should be around one page long and an essay 2~3 pages. Besides, an essay should include at least four paragraphs.

4. If you registered for the course during the summer break, it means that your personal data are already filed into the course webpage. However, the data are usually in default setting and may not be up-to-date or useful; for example, the email address listed there may not be the one where you usually pick up mails. In a word, you need to update your personal data on the webpage—at least to make sure that you get email announcements from me. If you registered for the course after the school began, contact me during a break so that I can create an account for you on the webpage.

5. There may be two one-hour tests near the middle and the end of the semester. Whether the tests will be held or not depends on my evaluation of your knowledge of English grammar and syntax as well as your command of some basic principles about English composition. In other words, if many of you consistently make the same mistakes of such kinds, the tests will be held.

VII. How Your Final Score Comes By:
1. Your semester score depends on four or five main sources: first, the scores for your group’s performance in oral presentation; second, those for both the first and final versions of your composition assignments; third, those for your peer reviews of your classmates’ composition assignment; four, if available, your scores for the two one-hour tests; last but not the least, your attendance record. The first part should take up around 20 percent; the second around 50 percent; the third 10 percent; the fourth 10 percent; the fifth 10 percent.

2. There is no guarantee, as some of you may believe, that you won’t fail this course as long as you turn in all your assignments on time and show up for class most of the time. Besides, although attendance record seems to take up only 10 percent of your semester score, you may still fail the course if you cut classes more than six times.