...ALMOST ANY ERROR, EXCEPT PERHAPS SOME MISSPELLINGS, REFLECTS IN SOME SENSE A SYNTACTIC PROBLEM.

—MINA P. SHAUGHNESSY

In this class, we will learn, practice and master prose relatively free of those very errors of syntax Ms Shaughnessy mentions above. To do so, we will learn, practice and master the axioms of Joseph M. Williams's grammar of clarity, axioms that he developed over a lifetime of research, teaching and authorship at the University of Chicago. Dr Williams's opus, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* should have be titled, as many before me have pointed out, *Syntax: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Precision*. Whatever the title, in that book, Dr Williams states that for his grammar of clarity, he drew on schema theory (patterns of thought), and theories of prototype semantics as developed by Dr Eleanore Rosch of UC, Berkeley. Sounds daunting, right? The stuff of dry and lofty 600-level PhD classes, right? Not at all. Not even in the slightest. In truth, Dr Williams's grammar of clarity is as simple, accessible and friendly as the grammar of the three little pigs — as we shall see in class.

Once we have learned the axioms, we will employ them to write lucid, well-researched arguments. But more on that below.

All-Important Syllabus Caveat Emptor:

We may need to change this document more than once throughout the next 10 weeks. We will change due dates and the class schedule if we must in order to best meet the needs of the class and the demands of the learning outcomes. Thus, do NOT print out this syllabus unless you are prepared to print out any and all subsequent updates.

Course Description:

This class will provide you with the opportunity of learning how to:

1. Perceive and relate various perspectives on a question at issue and formulate generalizations about these relations;
2. Identify assumptions and criteria to use in analyzing the writing of others;
3. Analyze and synthesize multiple sources—identify varying perspectives and logical relations among the sources, and respond to a question at issue;
4. Use citation and documentation effectively;
5. Identify logical progression in arguments;
6. Describe the interrelationship between style and meaning in the writing of others and adjust style to enhance meaning in one's own writing;
7. Take a position on a question at issue by developing a focused assertion based on a shared assumption, presenting evidence in support of a line of reasoning, addressing divergent stances on the issue, and using a variety of appeals while avoiding rhetorical fallacies

AND/OR

8. Critique source material by accurately summarizing all material used as well as identifying, analyzing, and appraising the source's assumptions, assertions, or textual features.

Instructor Contact Info:

Office: Black 225-26
Cell Email: professorbrityank@live.com (preferred)
Office Hours: MWF 9:00 - 9:50 adjacent to Shaw Smyser 214 and any daytime seven days a week by appointment.

Texts:

Joseph M. Williams, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace, First and Fifth Editions (instructor supplied); Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, Everything’s an Argument (instructor supplied); John Madden, Shakespeare In Love (student supplied).

General:

In this class you will write three analytical, well-researched and meticulously documented arguments: one of 900 words; one of 1200 words; one of 1500 words. You will first, though, write a summary/analysis of an argument. As you construct the summary and the subsequent arguments — paragraph by paragraph — we will occasionally, and under my guidance and tutelage, deconstruct in class a selected sampling of these papers to ensure that they address each and every one of the learning outcomes stated above. We will also conference each paper f2f on the Thursday, Saturday and Sunday before each due date. To avoid the unfairness of sign-up sheets which students pass around in-class, or the similar unfairness of sign-up sheets posted at a distance, you will sign up through a wiki I will create in Blackboard. By employing such a wiki sign-up sheet, we can also avoid any on-site lengthy queuing that past first-come/first-served systems may have engendered.

In these papers, the assignment requires you to underline each and every grammatical subject of ALL your clauses and bold-face the verbs of those grammatical subjects. The assignment requires this for two reasons. First I use the underlining/bold-facing as a diagnostic. Do you
really understand the two most elemental, vital and primal units of our written language. Many of you do not — at least not fully — enough of you to easily warrant the assignment’s requirement. Secondly, the assignment requires underlining and bold-facing to slow you down as you compose — to have you make conscious word choices, to represent the reality your prose describes as accurately and as closely as possible. In short, the requirement attempts to get you to focus, to prod you into actually writing your papers and not merely typing them in between checking for updates on your Facebook page or Twitter feed.

Please note: in the assignment’s requirement for underlining/bold-facing, the assignment is not asking you to do anything I am not willing to do. To wit, I will be writing sample essays for you to mirror, and we will do much of these sample essays in class and semi-collaboratively. We will write a sample summary analysis of Nicholas Kristof’s “His Libraries, 12,000 So Far, Change Lives,” a sample teacher definition about my 7th-grade art teacher Mrs Winters (“The Winters Of My Discontent”), a sample college evaluation (“U. Montana’s Graduate Writing Program: The Last Best Place”) and a sample comparison/contrast essay (“Shakespeares In Love”). In those sample essays, I will also strictly adhere to Professor Williams’s 3 axioms, at least 90% of the time (as the assignments require you to), and I will underline each and every grammatical subject and bold-face the verbs of all of those grammatical subjects.

The Summary Analysis:

You will read a NYTimes opinion piece, “Gang of 40,” by Nicholas B. Kristof and write a short essay summarizing, with utter neutrality, the piece’s argument;
Length: 1/3rd of the original’s 786-word length;
Style: MLA;
Points: 15:

7 for grammar, usage, syntax and punctuation; especially, but not limited to, using Professor Joseph Williams’s 3 axioms

- use characters as grammatical subjects in all your clauses (independent or subordinate);
- closely link those subjects to action verbs in the active voice;
- build paragraphs from clauses strung together with consistent grammatical subjects;

You will also earn points (or fail to earn points) for:

- pronoun use (that your pronouns have clear, unambiguous referents as covered in class and posted on Blackboard);
- punctuation (where punctuation miss-use or omission inhibits the reader's understanding);
- spelling (again, where misspellings inhibit understanding, or indicate overall sloppiness (rather than an occasional and innocent typographical error));
- register (that your word-choice avoids slang or language not befitting an academic setting).
8 for having a well-informed, thesis-driven, accurate, neutral, comprehensive and independent summary; a summary with:

- **limited** quotes from the original;
- a summary that, as the assignment indicates, contains short paragraphs equivalent in the number, the scope and the pith and substance of the original's sections;
- a summary rendered in the same order as the original.

**The Arguments:**

**Argument I: Extended Definition**

Define, with explicit examples, the term “teacher.”
Main source: your own informed experiences;
Secondary sources: your own research (required); Friedman, Thomas L., “Foreign Affairs: My Favorite Teacher”; Fish, Stanley, “The Hunt for a Good Teacher.”
Length: 900 words;
Style: MLA;
Points: 25:
11 for grammar, usage, syntax and punctuation; especially, but not limited to, using Professor Joseph Williams’s 3 axioms

- use characters as grammatical subjects in all your clauses (independent or subordinate);
- closely link those subjects to action verbs in the active voice;
- build paragraphs from clauses strung together with consistent grammatical subjects;

You will also earn points (or fail to earn points) for:

- pronoun use (that your pronouns have clear, unambiguous referents as covered in class and posted on Blackboard);
- punctuation (where punctuation miss-use or omission inhibits the reader's understanding);
- spelling (again, where misspellings inhibit understanding, or indicate overall sloppiness (rather than an occasional and innocent typographical error));
- register (that your word-choice avoids slang or language not befitting an academic setting).

14 for having a well-reasoned, thesis-driven, qualified argument in which any underlying assumptions are supported. You will also earn (or fail to earn) points by ensuring that you have all three essential components of an extended definition:

- the actual definition, which precisely and originally (i.e., no dictionary definitions) demarcates the boundaries of your term;
• the narrative, which gives an actual, clearly-rendered incident containing living, breathing renditions of place, time and person, all of which illustrate the demarked definition (as all persuasive narrative argument must);

• the evidentiary which, again, gives a clearly-related incident containing living, breathing renditions of place, time and person, all of which unequivocally support your contention that your narrative fulfills your definition.

Argument II: Evaluation

Write a detailed evaluation of CWU — either the university itself (campus, location, amenities) or your particular program (music, flight, football). Your evaluation should contain each and every characteristic of the ones we will cover in class.

Main Source: Bruni, Frank, "How To Choose a College"; Pogue, David, "BlackBerry, Rebuilt, Lives to Fight Another Day."

Other Main Sources: your own meticulous and documented research including (but not limited to) statistical and factual research (online or otherwise) and interviews of CWU staff, faculty and students;

Length: 1200 words;
Style: MLA;
Points: 25:
10 for grammar, usage, syntax and punctuation; especially, but not limited to, using Professor Joseph Williams's 3 axioms

• use characters as grammatical subjects in all your clauses (independent or subordinate);

• closely link those subjects to action verbs in the active voice;

• build paragraphs from clauses strung together with consistent grammatical subjects;

You will also earn points (or fail to earn points) for:

• pronoun use (that your pronouns have clear, unambiguous referents as covered in class and posted on Blackboard);

• punctuation (where punctuation miss-use or omission inhibits the reader's understanding);

• spelling (again, where misspellings inhibit understanding, or indicate overall sloppiness (rather than an occasional and innocent typographical error));

• register (that your word-choice avoids slang or language not befitting an academic setting).

15 for having a well-reasoned, thesis-driven, qualified argument in which any underlying assumptions are supported and which contains well-developed, well-researched, and well-documented paragraphs. You will also earn (or fail to earn) points by ensuring you have included all the ingredients of the quintessential evaluation, i.e., that you have:

• top-loaded your overall judgment;
• given the broader context of your evaluation;
• stated a clear set of criteria and supported your choice of criteria;
• expressed a precise judgment on each criteria in turn and supported each judgment in turn with documented evidence, data, verifiable facts and expert witness;
• addressed the contrary of any of your judgments and either allowed them admission or refuted them;
• restated your overall judgment and your judgments of each criteria in turn, summarizing your evidence;
• ended gracefully by revisiting your beginning.

Argument III: Compare/Contrast

Is “Will” in Shakespeare in Love really in love or is it just lust or limerence or infatuation, and to do so you will compare/contrast Will and Viola's “love” with another romantic couple, either fictive (film, theatre, literature) or real-life;
Main source: Madden, John, Shakespeare in Love;
Secondary sources: Fischer, Helen, “Brains Do It: Lust, Attraction, and Attachment”; your own research (required); your own informed experiences (required);
Length: 1500 words;
Style: MLA;
Points: 35:
15 for grammar, usage, syntax and punctuation; especially, but not limited to, using Professor Joseph Williams's 3 axioms

• use characters as grammatical subjects in all your clauses (independent or subordinate);
• closely link those subjects to action verbs in the active voice;
• build paragraphs from clauses strung together with consistent grammatical subjects;

You will also earn points (or fail to earn points) for:

• pronoun use (that your pronouns have clear, unambiguous referents as covered in class and posted on Blackboard);
• punctuation (where punctuation miss-use or omission inhibits the reader's understanding);
• spelling (again, where misspellings inhibit understanding, or indicate overall sloppiness (rather than an occasional and innocent typographical error));
• register (that your word-choice avoids slang or language not befitting an academic setting).

20 for having a well-reasoned, thesis-driven, qualified argument in which any underlying assumptions are supported. You will also earn (or fail to earn) points by ensuring that you fulfill all of the assignment's requests:
slavishly and meticulously ensure accurate rendition of the events and dialogue of the SIL film and the alternate film/real-life romance you use to buttress your nature-of-love argument to thus lift your argument from the realm of 'hasty generalization' fallacy;

ensure that you compare and contrast the events of your alternate romance to the events in the SIL romance;

painstakingly ensure that you provide ample and blatant discourse on why any particular event/line of dialogue in the film or in your alternative buttressing romance supports your contention about the nature of love (in other words, don't just tell me what happens, tell me why what happens matters);

tell me why what happens matters.

ensure that you observe the literary convention of using the present tense of verbs when relating events in the fictional/cinematic narrative.

**Grading:**

I do not give grades. Repeat: I do not give grades. Students earn their grades. Thus, do not complain to me about your grades: I do not and did not write your essays; you wrote them, and you submitted them. If those essays earn less than you hoped, then take it up with the essays' author: you.

Each paper counts as recorded above, totaling 100 points;

We will have a grammar test, a midterm, and various homework quizzes totaling up to 20 points;

Total: 120 points (minimum).

**Key To Marking Marks**

Failure to use axiom 1: characters as grammatical subjects

The calling of names by Bob was by us.

Failure to use axiom 2: action/active-voice verbs

Pronoun Miss-Use (incorrect case, gender, #, unclear referent

Spelling error

Missing punctuation, word, etc.

Unnecessary punctuation, word, etc.

Poor/puzzling word choice

Awkward phrasing
Important Dates:

07 Oct — Grammar Test
17, 19, 20, 22 Oct — Wiki sign-up beginning at precisely 12:00 a.m. on each date
17, 19, 20, 22 Oct — F2F conferences
23 Oct — Summary hard copy due
28 Oct — Midterm Grammar Test
31 Oct, 02, 03 Nov — Wiki sign-up beginning at precisely 12:00 a.m. on each date
31 Oct, 02, 03 Nov — F2F conferences
04 Nov — Teacher Definition hard copy due
21, 23, 24 Nov — Wiki sign-up beginning at precisely 12:00 a.m. on each date
21, 23, 24 Nov — F2F conferences
25 Nov — CWU Evaluation Hard Copy Due
05, 07, 08 Dec — Wiki sign-up beginning at precisely 6:00 a.m. on each date
05, 07, 08 Dec — F2F conferences
10 Dec — Shakespeare In Love hard copy due in English Dept, 4th Floor, L&L

Attendance:

You are allowed three excused non-participatory events (absences) and no more, regardless of the reason — influenza, stock market troughs, intergalactic war. For each subsequent absence beyond the third, your final grade will be lowered one step (i.e. a B sinks to a B-). By “attendance” I mean showing up to class with your required work-in-progress uploaded and/or assigned reading done. Otherwise you will earn a NPE tickie. And, yes, some students in the past have earned 2 (count them: 2) NPE tickies on the same day.

If you miss a class, **you and you alone** bear the **sole** responsibility to get notes, assignments, and handouts from a classmate.

Late papers:

I don’t accept them — period!

More Bad News:

I accept only hard copy.

Classroom etiquette:
No cell phones, no head phones, no texting. Repeat: **No cell phones, no head phones, no texting.** (Did I say, “No cell phones, no head phones, no texting?”) And no talking — unless called upon. I have absolutely no tolerance for any of the former and if you resist you will be summarily dispatched.

**Plagiarism:**

Don’t. I’ll catch you and you’ll fail this class — and face certain expulsion.

**Final:**

The Shakespeare in Love essay will also encompass the final exam, which is why this assignment offers additional points (35 instead of 25) and requires additional work (1500 words instead of 1200).

**ADA Statement:**

If you have a disability and wish to set up academic adjustments in this class, please give me a copy of your “Confirmation of Eligibility for Academic Adjustments” as soon as possible so we can discuss how to implement the approved adjustments. If you do not have this form, contact the Disability Support Services Office, Bouillon 140 or ds@cwu.edu or 963-1202.

**Diversity**

In my classroom, diversity is welcomed and celebrated. I will not tolerate any forms of prejudice or discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We are here to learn in a climate of civility and mutual respect.