ENG 1101, Writing the Brain: Composition and Neuroscience

ENG 1101 D340 | MW 11:30AM-12:45PM | Namm N-1004

ENG 1101 D371 | MW 2:30PM-3:45PM | Namm N-403

Professor: Dr. Jason W. Ellis | Office: Namm N-520 | Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:15AM or by appointment | Contact: jellis@citytech.cuny.edu

Class Description

City Tech's ENG 1101 course prepares you for the kinds of communication, research, and literacy that you will use throughout your academic and professional careers. Furthermore, it develops students' understanding, application, and critical awareness of two big ideas: 1) Communication is rhetorical, and 2) Communication is multimodal, or WOVEN (written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal). Through a series of process-driven projects, some of which are individually based and others collaborative, you will gain a deeper understanding of effective and persuasive communication techniques while developing your critical thinking skills and multiple literacies.

Each ENG 1101 class is unique, because while each one has the same basic outcomes, each is taught by an instructor with his or her own research and pedagogical approach. In our class, we will use the interdisciplinary field of the neurosciences as a way to focus our conversations and projects. Of course, communication is about the transference of information via the senses and processed by each audience member's brain. In addition, the brain and its embodied perception systems define how we are most receptive to receiving communications, thinking about communications, and being persuaded by communications. If we understand how the brain/body works, we can apply this knowledge to being more effective communicators and successful professionals.

Learning Objectives and Prerequisites (See Additional Handout)

Required Texts:

Gottschall, Jonathan. *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.

Medina, John. *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*. Seattle: Pear Press, 2008.

Other readings will be made available on our OpenLab website or via emailed links to content.

Required Resources:

Access to a computer with Microsoft Office, OpenOffice, or LibreOffice. While you will submit most of your work on the OpenLab BuddyPress/WordPress platform, you will use Office-suite software to compose your drafts. We will go over how to use the tools built into this software to improve your writing before posting it online.

Ability to print documents.

Bring to each class: 1" three-ring binder with loose-leaf college-ruled paper and a blue or black pen. Keep your syllabus and assignment sheets in this folder.

Access your City Tech email. **This has to be taken care of immediately.**

Signup for an account at openlab.citytech.cuny.edu and join our class (will be discussed in class). **This has to be taken care of immediately after accessing your email.**

Recommended Resources

City Tech's Ursula C. Schwerin Library, Atrium 4th Floor: http://library.citytech.cuny.edu

City Tech Learning Center, Atrium G-18: http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/students/learningcenter/

City Tech Campus-Wide Computer Labs:
http://cis.citytech.cuny.edu/Administrative/it_admin_computerlab.aspx

Student Computing Help Desk, Namm 124C: http://cis.citytech.cuny.edu/Student/it_student.aspx

City Tech Student Handbook: http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/files/students/handbook.pdf

City Tech College Catalog: http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/catalog_listing.shtml

Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

Grading Policy

Due dates are provided for assignments on the tentative schedule. Instructions for these assignments will be given to you with plenty of time to discuss them with me or your peers before they are due. Should you have any questions, concerns, or issues about an assignment, you MUST speak with me BEFORE an assignment is due, because ALL GRADES FOR THIS COURSE ARE FINAL. This means that I will not entertain student arguments for grade changes after an assignment is completed. Also, failure to complete any major assignment in the course may result in the failure of the course as a whole. Should you find yourself having trouble, you MUST speak with me BEFORE an assignment is due. I will not listen to any arguments after an assignment is completed. If assignments are submitted late, one letter grade will be deducted from the assignment's score for each day that the assignment is late.

Attendance Policy

I make no distinction between excused and excused absences. City Tech permits students to miss three absences without penalty. However, absence does not give you an extension on assignment or presentation due dates. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure her or his work is turned in on time and presentations are made according to schedule. Presentations cannot be made up except in the most exceptional cases. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in class for its duration. Each late arrival or early exit will equal half of an absence. Excessive absence can result in failure of the course or a final WU grade.

Course Grade Distribution

Project	Description	Multimodality	Value
Project 1: Writing the Brain	Spread out through three modules involving personal note taking, photos, and a 1,250-word essay, students will have the opportunity to map what they want to think about against what they must think about. This project will demonstrate the way multimodality can be used for a variety of purposes and arguments. Each module will require team discussion and review. You will post your essay and photos in a blog post on our OpenLab site.	Written (notes, essay, photos, and reflection) Oral (group discussion and peer review) Visual (Twitter, essay, and photos) Electronic (Twitter and photos) Nonverbal (team interaction)	**25%**
Project 2:	In this project, you will	Written (research, script, and	**25%**

Wiring Your Brain for the Future	research an interdisciplinary debate or important topic in your field of study using library and database resources. Consider your own solution or direction for your discipline and support your idea with the research that you have done. Present your argument in an essay of at least 1,250 words posted to our OpenLab site and summary presentation following the Pecha Kucha-20x20 format with photos taken by yourself.	reflection) Oral (peer review of content, and presentation) Visual (PowerPoint and photos) Electronic (PowerPoint, photos, and script) Nonverbal (elements of your presentation and team interaction during peer review)	
Writing Assignments and OpenLab Blog	These form the backbone of our discussions and support your engagement with class topics. When a reading is assigned for class, you should write notes about the reading in your three-ring binder. During class, you will have an opportunity to write your notes into a coherent summary. After class, login to OpenLab and write a comment of at least 250 words summarizing the reading, what you learned in discussion, and how you can apply what you learned to your personal, academic, or professional life. You will do this for each reading assigned throughout the semester. Other milestone writing assignments will be included in this part of your grade.	Written (Notes, OpenLab blog comment) Electronic (OpenLab blog comment)	**30%**
Individual Reading Presentation	Each student will have an opportunity during the semester to give a brief presentation on a given day's reading assignment. These presentations should be approximately 5 minutes long,	Written Oral Visual Electronic Nonverbal	**10%**

	supported by a Powerpoint presentation, and accompanied by notes (you may bring printed notes or handwritten notes on 3x5 note cards).		
Final Exam	This is a departmental exam that tests your ability to read and discuss a nonfiction article. If you pass the exam, your score is averaged into your course grade. If you fail this exam, you fail the course.	Written	**10%**
Total			**100%**

Teaching Philosophy and Standards for Professor Performance

As a first generation college graduate, I deeply understand the importance of a college education. Furthermore, my experiences as a student—positive and negative—inform the way that I design and teach classes. I know firsthand and by studying the research of others that learning and cognitive development takes place best through extensive practice and challenging work. Put another way, you have to work out your brain as you work out your cardiovascular system (work over time) and your muscular system (repetitions and exceeding prior limits). If you are not metaphorically sweating and in pain, you are likely not achieving the cognitive development that you desire. Think of me as your trainer. I will teach you techniques, I will encourage you to push past what you think you are capable of, and I will spot you to make sure that you are safe. As a class, we should all be working together and supporting one another.

You can expect me to:	You should not expect me to:
• Be professional inside and outside the classroom. • Treat you like an adult in a professional and respectful manner. • Be prepared for class. • Attend class regularly. • Respond promptly to email communication. • Adhere to my policies and standards. • Be available for student meetings with an appointment. • Maintain a positive attitude. • Be a problem solver. • Offer thoughtful, constructive criticism on your work.	• Accept notes or other documents from third parties excusing you from class or other activities. • Respond favorably to excuses of any kind. • Answer emails or phone calls from parents, guardians, or other third parties. • Be available outside my office hours without an appointment. • Respond favorably to any argument for missing my class or leaving my class early because of activities in another class. • Make exceptions to my policies and

• Be a coach, instead of a "sage on the stage," in the classroom. • Be a mentor.	standards. • Grant make-ups. • Accept late work without a *pre-arranged* extension. • Answer emails on the weekends.

Standards for Student Performance

Another important aspect of this class is developing your professionalism. Expect to be held to these professional standards in our class:

- **Respect deadlines.** In the workplace, you will be held to a high standard of making and meeting project deadlines. I do not accept late work unless the student speaks with me about arranging an extension. I do not guarantee extension, but I often grant them if there is a documented, compelling need that is identified before an assignment is due.
- **Do not expect make-ups.** In the workplace, there are consequences for poor performance or incomplete projects. Likewise in our class, you should not expect any make-up opportunities for late or incomplete work. Students who participate in school sanctioned absences are a possible exception, but it is the responsibility of those students to meet with me before assignments are due to discuss and establish a plan for the individual student.
- **Arrive on time for class and stay for the duration of class.** Being late or leaving early can be disruptive and are disrespectful in any situation, especially in the workplace. I assign partial absences to students who arrive late or leave early, because those students miss a portion of the class lecture, exercises, or team participation. Students who are perpetually late run the risk of receiving a failing grade in the class.
- **Respect others.** Following a workplace example, we will treat our class as meetings. This means that you should not disrupt class with texting, phone calls, or unnecessary computer sounds. Furthermore, you should respect the people who you work with in class on daily assignments or major projects. Give one another your full attention, your attention to detail, and your vast wealth of expertise. In addition, be receptive to constructive criticism and provide it in full measure to your classroom colleagues.
- **Maintain a positive attitude.** Many of your projects will be collaborative. Having a negative attitude can influence your and your teammates' performance and success. Put your best foot forward regardless of any situation's challenges.
- **Be a problem solver.** This is the best strategy for maintaining a positive attitude. The workplace is replete with problems, miscommunications, and difficulties. In any job or situation, we should work toward solutions, compromises, and successful communication. This involves identifying where the problem lies, figuring out a solution, applying the solution, evaluating its success, and revising if possible until the problem is fully resolved (or as resolved as possible). This class gives you many opportunities to be a problem solver in preparation for the higher stakes of the workplace.

Student Opportunities for Developing Significant Skills

- **Reading:** As indicated on the schedule, there will be approximately 25 pages of reading due for each class on average.
- **Writing:** Each class begins with a brief writing prompt related to that day's reading. This helps you gather your thoughts together before discussion and the regular writing practice has been shown to improve writing ability in general. This is true for native English speakers and English language learners (ELL) alike.
- **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking:** Through your work in the class, you will have many opportunities to develop heuristics based on your critical analysis of complex issues, and you will improve your rhetorical acumen through observation, analysis, discussion, and iterative application of rhetorical techniques.
- **Presentations:** During the semester, each student will have an opportunity to give a low-stakes presentation on a given day's reading and a higher-stakes research-based presentation on the final major project.
- **Team Work:** Many of the daily exercises will involve cooperative teamwork of several students. Some of the major projects will require teams of students to work together for an extended time on a collaborative project. Developing rhetorically effective communication is also process-driven. This means that we will rely on peer review to improve your writing as part of a process of revision that you can employ in your other classes and in the workplace.
- **Multimodality:** The assignments in this class were designed to give you an opportunity at working with WOVEN modalities in different ways. As we will learn from our neuroscience readings, humans integrate and remember information that is meaningfully conveyed using multimodalities. You will learn how to do this more effectively.
- **Professional Responsibility:** It is your responsibility to follow the schedule, obtain notes from your classmates when absent, communicate with the professor if there are concerns or problems that might affect your success in the class, and safeguard your work by keeping multiple backups.

Nondiscrimination Policy

This class does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, disability, or status as a veteran. Alternative viewpoints are welcome; however, statements that are deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory toward others in the class or outside the class will not be tolerated.

Accommodations Policy

Qualified students with disabilities will be provided reasonable academic accommodations if determined eligible by the Student Support Services Program (SSSP). Prior to granting disability accommodations in this course, the instructor must receive written verification of a student's eligibility from SSSP, which is located in A-237. It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the SSSP staff and to follow the established procedures for having the accommodation notice sent to the instructor.

Communication

The best and most efficient way to contact me is by email. Please feel free to email me with your questions about the readings, assignments, or anything else pertaining to the class. While I am not an official advisor, I can offer first-hand advice and I can point students toward resources for student success. If I do not know the answer to a question, I will find out for you. I will not discuss grades by email, but I will be happy to discuss student grades in person during my office hours or by appointment. Please feel free to stop by during my office hours, but please send me an email beforehand so that I can prepare appropriately for what you would like to discuss. I will send official announcements to the class by email. Each student is expected to check her or his email before class.

Office Hours

I encourage students to meet with me outside of class to discuss their work. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, you may setup an appointment to meet with me at another time. Students should send me an email at least 24 hours in advance requesting a meeting and including information about the student's available meeting times for the next few days.

New York City College of Technology Policy on Academic Integrity

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog (http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/catalog_listing.shtml).

While we will discuss academic integrity and plagiarism in class, please do not hesitate to seek my advice on this subject should you have any question at any time before an assignment is due. In our class, any writing or work by others that you incorporate into your writing and work should be properly attributed using MLA professional style. There is a section on MLA in the Purdue OWL website (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/). City Tech provides a list of tips on avoiding plagiarism (http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/students/academic_integrity/plagiarism_tips.pdf).

Tentative Schedule

I believe that classes should be organic and adaptive for each group of students. Therefore, I reserve the right to alter the following tentative schedule depending on the needs of the class as a whole. This also means that you have to be involved and invested to reap the greatest reward from our class. If you have suggestions for supplemental readings or viewings, please share them with me. If you have questions about the course content, please speak with me.

Week	Day	Date	Reading/Announcements	Work	Due
1	W	1/28	**FIRST DAY OF CLASS**	Instructor, class, and syllabus introductions. Activate your City Tech email if you have not already done so. Create an account on openlab.citytech.cuny.edu. Navigate to our OpenLab site and join.	**Complete last page of syllabus and return to the professor at the end of class or beginning of next class.**
2	M	2/2	Before today's class, read the PDF emailed to the class last week.	Assign seats and give reading presentation assignments. Example presentation. Note taking basics. Begin foundational lectures on rhetoric and multimodality.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.**
	W	2/4	Neuromyths (all 10 linked on this web page: http://www.brainfacts.org/neuromyths/. Introduce Project One.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.**
3	M	2/9	Michael O'Shea's *The Brain* chapter 1. Download from OpenLab. Bring a printed copy to class.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	2/11	Gary Marcus' *Kluge* chapter 1. Download from OpenLab. Bring a printed copy to class.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
4	M	2/16	No Class: Presidents' Day		
	W	2/18	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Introduction		**Blog: Comment on post for previous**

					class' reading.
5	M	2/23	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Exercise.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.**
	W	2/25	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, The Witchery of Story.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
6	M	3/2	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Sleep.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	3/4	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, The Riddle of Fiction.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
7	M	3/9	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Stress.		
	W	3/11	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, Hell is Story-Friendly.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
8	M	3/16	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Wiring.	Student-led introduction to the reading. Introduce Project Two.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.** **Project One Blog Post Due on OpenLab before class begins.**
	W	3/18	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, Night Story.	Student-led introduction to the reading. NB: Midterm grades available.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on**

					post for previous class' reading.
9	M	3/23	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Attention.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	3/25	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, The Mind is a Storyteller.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
10	M	3/30	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Memory.	Student-led introduction to the reading. Midterm grades available.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	4/1	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, The Moral of the Story.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
11	M	4/6	**No Class: Spring Recess**		
	W	4/8	**No Class: Spring Recess**		
12	M	4/13	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Sensory Integration.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	4/15	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, Ink People Change the World.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
13	M	4/20	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Vision.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	4/22	Jonathan Gottschall's *The*	Student-led introduction to the	**Three-ring Binder:**

			Storytelling Animal, Life Stories.	reading.	**Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
14	M	4/27	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Music.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	4/29	Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal*, The Future of Story.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
15	M	5/4	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Gender.	Student-led introduction to the reading.	**Three-ring Binder: Notes on today's reading.** **Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.**
	W	5/6	John Medina's *Brain Rules*, Exploration.	Project Two Presentations.	**Blog: Comment on post for previous class' reading.** **Project Two Blog Post Due on OpenLab.**
16	M	5/11		Project Two Presentations.	
	W	5/13		Project Two Presentations.	
17	M	5/18		Practice final exam discussion. Handout readings for final exam.	**Practice final exam due.**
	W	5/20	Final exam during class.		

Syllabus/Policy Acknowledgment and Permission Statement

PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS BY OUR NEXT CLASS.

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for _____ and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

_____
print name

_____
signature

_____
date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.

- o I give my instructor, JASON W. ELLIS, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications.

- o I do NOT give my instructor, JASON W. ELLIS, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications.

Please indicate whether you want to be acknowledged if your work is used:

- o Please use my name in association with my work.

- o Please use my work, but do NOT acknowledge me.

If your instructor decides to use your work, he//she may wish to contact you. Please provide your contact information below:

_____
print name

_____
signature

_____
email address

_____
phone number

_____
print address

_____
date