

Objective Communication II (aka Intermediate Writing)

ARI Live Courses Syllabus

Last updated: September 11, 2025

COURSE TITLE: Objective Communication II (aka Intermediate Writing)

COURSE YEAR AND TERM: Fall 2025 + Winter 2026

PREREQUISITES

Students must have completed, or be concurrently enrolled in, Introduction to Writing

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course builds on the foundation laid in Introduction to Writing, continuing the study of objective communication. Communication is treated as a science, as a skill that has certain objective principles that can be learned and applied to the improvement of one's work. The focus in part 2 is on the writing process.

COURSE DURATION: Approximately 14-15 weeks (live instruction only occurs in weeks 7-15)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Lead Instructor(s):

Keith Lockitch

Lead TA:

Agustina Vergara Cid

Assisting TAs:

Sam Weaver

Samantha Watkins

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is a continuation of Introduction to Writing, which teaches the basic principles and methods of objective communication. It is designed so that it can be taken concurrently with Introduction to Writing; the first quarter of this course overlaps with the second quarter of Introduction to Writing and both courses can be taken at the same time. However, it can also be taken separately from Introduction to Writing for students who've already taken Introduction to Writing. The course focuses on the writing process—on how to break the process of writing up into separate stages involving different cognitive tasks.

Quarter 1 (Fall 2025): There are no live classes in the first quarter (students who are taking Introduction to Writing concurrently will have live classes in that course.) The work in the first quarter consists of weekly homework assignments in which students develop an op-ed length article by going step by step through the various stages of the writing process. This will be a new article, independent of the one written for the Introduction to Writing course.

Quarter 2 (Winter 2025): The second quarter will consist of live classes in which we'll discuss the student papers and writing process assignments. We'll create schedule for the paper discussions by polling students on their availability to attend class live. To accommodate people in different times zones, classes will begin either at 10am PT or at 12pm PT. There will be a weekly schedule indicating the start time for each class.

- Classes will meet either: **Wednesday, 10:00am–12:00pm PT**, or
- **Wednesdays 12:00–2:00pm PT**.

Depending on the number of students, we may also add classes on other days of the week, likely Fridays, at similar times as above.

To reduce the overall time burden of the course, you will only be required to attend 2 of the paper discussion classes in person—though you are certainly welcome to attend (or listen to the recordings of) all the classes if your schedule permits.

LIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

The following table gives a week-by-week breakdown of the course topics and the dates of each live class. It also lists the assignments, their due dates, and the percentage weighting they contribute to your grade for the course. Information on each assignment will be provided in class and/or on the course website.

| Interm W Week | Intro W week | Week of: | Topic / Assignment | Percentage of Final Grade | Dates of Wednesday Classes: | Dates of Friday Classes (if needed): | Homework Due Date (11:59 pm your local time) |
|---|--------------|------------------|---|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Q1 - Part 1 | | | | | | | |
| Week 0 | 11 | Oct. 26 - Nov. 1 | <start thinking about a paper topic> | | | | |
| Week 1 | 12 | Nov. 2-8 | Writing Process 1: Thinking notes | 5% | | | Sunday, Nov. 9 |
| Week 2 | 13 | Nov. 9-15 | Writing Process 2: Outlines | 5% | | | Sunday, Nov. 16 |
| Week 3 | 14 | Nov. 16-22 | Writing Process 3: Paper - first draft | 5% | | | Sunday, Nov. 30 |
| <i>U.S. Thanksgiving</i> | | Nov. 23-29 | <no homework> | | | | |
| Week 4 | 15 | Nov. 30 - Dec. 6 | Writing Process 4: Self-assessment | 20% | | | Sunday, Dec. 7 |
| Week 5 | 16 | Dec. 7-13 | Word choice | 5% | | | Sunday, Dec. 14 |
| Week 6 | 17 | Dec. 14-20 | Writing Process 5: Paper - final draft | 40% | | | Sunday, Dec. 21 |
| <i>Holiday break</i> | | Dec. 21 - Jan. 3 | <break> | | | | |
| Q2 - Part 2 | | | | | | | |
| Week 7 | | Jan. 4-10 | Lead student evaluation | 12% | | | Sunday, Jan. 11 |
| Week 8 | | Jan. 11-17 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Jan. 14 | | |
| Week 9 | | Jan. 18-24 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Jan.21 | Jan.23 | |
| Week 10 | | Jan. 25-31 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Jan. 28 | Jan. 30 | |
| Week 11 | | Feb. 1-7 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Feb. 4 | Feb. 6 | |
| Week 12 | | Feb. 8-14 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Feb. 11 | Feb. 13 | |
| Week 13 | | Feb. 15-21 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Feb. 18 | Feb. 20 | |
| Week 14 | | Feb. 21-28 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Feb. 25 | Feb. 27 | |
| Week 15 | | Mar. 1-7 | <prepare for class discussion > | | Mar. 4 | | |
| | | | Paper discussion take-aways | 8% | | | Sunday, after the discussion of your paper |
| Students must attend live 2 of the paper discussion classes, but may attend more of them (or listen to the recordings) as their schedule permits. | | | | | | | |

OFFICE HOURS

This course does not have regularly scheduled office hours, but ad hoc office hours are available by appointment. To request a meeting, please email the lead TA (Agustina).

READINGS

Students are expected to have acquired these texts ahead of the course commencement:
 Rand, Ayn. *The Art of Nonfiction*, Ed. Robert Mayhew. New York: Plume, 2001.

OVERALL COURSE GRADE

See the above table

COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES

All policies from the ARI Live Courses Handbook apply to this course, including policies on late work and extensions. Extensions must be requested at least 48 hours before the deadline. If you'd like to request an extension, please email me directly.

Let me stress that I would greatly prefer for you to request an extension in advance than to simply fail to hand an assignment in on time with no prior communication. Generally, I would much rather hear from you if you're at risk of falling behind than for you to go radio silent until it's too late to catch up.

Another policy I want to mention explicitly is the policy about seeking help or input from others on your writing. It's completely understandable that you might want to get feedback from trusted friends or family before handing in writing assignments for this class, but doing so will actually impede your development of the skill of doing your own thinking about writing and editing.

It's similarly understandable that you might be interested in using AI tools as part of your writing process. These new technologies are valuable and will likely be part of everyone's workflow in the future—but again, the use of them in this setting will be an obstacle to your developing the knowledge and skills that we are covering in this course.

The goal of this course is for *you* to develop your thinking abilities as both a writer and an editor. While there is a time and a place for outside assistance with writing (whether human or robotic), a classroom setting in which thinking about how to write and edit are the very skills that you are learning is not the right time or place for it.

Here is the relevant section from the ARI Live Courses Student Handbook:

Your Work Must Be Your Own

The primary purposes of ARU assignments are 1) to help you to develop your ability to think about and communicate philosophical issues; and 2) to help instructors to understand where you are in your development of these abilities. To accomplish these aims, your work must be entirely your own and should not have input from others or—unless explicitly allowed by the instructor and cited in your assignment—from outside sources. This means that you should not be collaborating with others or asking others to review your work before submitting it. This includes collaboration between spouses and in other close relationships.

GRADE SCALE

Here is the grade scale that will be used in this course (as well as other ARI Live courses). ***Please be aware that there are some unusual features of the scale.***

We use a point system that scores assignments out of 5 points or 20 points. These scores are correlated to letter grades according to the scale shown below. However, if you calculate the equivalent percentage of any given score, it will look very strange compared to typical grade scales used at other institutions.

Here is the grade scale we use:

| Score (out of 5) | Score (out of 20) | Letter Grade | Equivalent percentage (not a meaningful number) |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------|--|
| 5 | 19, 20 | A | 95-100% |
| | 17, 18 | A- | 85-90% |
| 4 | 15, 16 | B+ | 75-80% |
| | 13, 14 | B | 65-70% |
| 3 | 11, 12 | B- | 55-60% |
| | 9, 10 | C+ | 45-50% |
| 2 | 7, 8 | C | 35-40% |
| | 5, 6 | C- | 25-30% |
| 1 | 3, 4 | D+ | 15-20% |
| | 2 | D | 10% |
| | 1 | D- | 5% |
| 0 | 0 | F | 0% |

Notice, for instance, that a “B-” grade of 3/5 or 12/20 is equal to a percentage of 60%. But one doesn’t normally associate 60% with a grade of “B-” (or a percentage of 40% with a “C”).

There are a couple of reasons for our use of this grade scale:

1. We don’t inflate or curve grades. It’s meant to be very difficult to get a 5/5 or 20/20 on an ARI Live assignment. So, a grade of 2 or 3 (or equivalently, a grade of 8 to 12) on an assignment is not atypical and is not considered a failing grade.
2. The point values are correlated with specific rubrics depending on the type of assignment. For the writing course, these rubrics will be shared later on in the course.

For these reasons, when you look at your grades for any given assignment, please pay attention to the point value and the letter grade, but don’t ascribe too much meaning or significance to the percentage value.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

These are supplementary works you might find helpful for particular topics.

- Davenport, Phyllis. (2004). *Rex barks*. Kerhonkson, NY: Paper Tiger.
- Foerster, Norman & Steadman, John Jr. (2000) *Writing and thinking*. Kerhonkson, NY: Paper Tiger.
- Hacker, Diana. (2002). *A writer's reference*, 5th ed., Boston: St. Martin's.
- Mitchell, Richard. (2004). *Less than words can say*, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger.
- Peikoff, Leonard. (2020). *Principles of Grammar*, Michael Berliner (editor), Curtis Brown
- Rand, Ayn. (2000). *The art of fiction*. ed. Tore Boeckmann. New York: Plume.
- Trimbur, John. (2004). *The call to write*, 3rd ed., New York: Longman.
- Williams, Joseph. (1995). *Style: Toward clarity and grace*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Web Resources and Audio Courses:

- Grammar Revolution. Introductory grammar materials:
 - <https://www.english-grammar-revolution.com>
 - Easy Grammar. Full series of grade school grammar books:
 - <https://www.easygrammar.com>
 - Full text of Richard Mitchell's "Less than words can say" plus other writings, available at
 - <http://www.sourcetext.com/grammarian>
 - Peikoff, Leonard. "The Principles of Grammar" 1982, lectures available at
 - <https://courses.aynrand.org/campus-courses/principles-of-grammar/>
 - Peikoff, Leonard. "Writing: A Mini-Course," 1994, audio lectures available at
 - <https://estore.aynrand.org/products/writing-a-mini-course-mp3-download>
 - Schwartz, Peter. "The Writing Process," 1999, audio lectures available at
 - <https://estore.aynrand.org/products/the-writing-process-mp3-download>
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GENERAL POLICIES:

Familiarize yourself with the [ARI Live Courses Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

COURSE ACCESS:

Upon enrollment, you will be provided access to the course via Populi, from where you will have access to:

- Live class schedule and the "Join Conference" Zoom link to attend live classes
- Recordings of past classes
- Office hour details, including links to book an appointment
- Teaching assistant information
- How to join the ARI Live Courses Discord server

Populi also has an app that provides limited access to the course on mobile. Contact livecourses@aynrand.org if you have any issues accessing the course on Populi.

COURSE COMMUNICATION:

- Course announcements are posted in the course Bulletin Board on Populi and automatically sent out as email or push notifications to your device if using the Populi mobile app. Please make sure you are receiving these emails and notifications, and that the emails are not going to your spam folder. If you join after the start of class, be sure to check the course Bulletin Board for anything you may have missed.
- For questions about course content, structure or schedule, please ask during the live class or in the course channel on the ARI Live Courses Discord server (see the Discord information placed on Populi). Questions about your assignments and grades should be directed to the teaching assistant.
- For personal administrative issues (e.g., website problems), contact livecourses@aynrand.org.
- If you have a technical issue preventing submission of an assignment, email your assignment to the Instructor or TA and cc: livecourses@aynrand.org to troubleshoot the matter.