

## Weekly Grammar Review

Despite the rise of mass communications and the integration of those communications into the internet, it remains true that very few of the people with whom we communicate who are not in our immediate physical presence will actually hear our voices or see our faces. Instead, we will communicate with them through writing, whether that writing is a text message, a Twitter tweet, an e-mail, or something we've typed on our computers or written longhand. Nor is writing only the means by which we communicate with people in some other place; it is also the means by which we communicate with people in some other time. Consider that William Shakespeare has been dead for four centuries, but through his writing he still communicates with us. So also do the still longer-gone authors of the books of the Bible and the composers of the world's great epic poems. The fact that our writing is the only way that people who don't know us personally and aren't within sight of our faces or within hearing of our voices can know us and the quality of minds makes it especially important that we write well, because if we write poorly, they are likely to draw the conclusion that we are idiots, or fools.

Perhaps because of this, the Provost has urged faculty to integrate writing practice into their routine class assignments, and it is, in fact, required by the History Department that all upper-division history courses include a writing component. This course responds to that requirement by assigning a major writing project, the Journal Research Report, and drawing half of the credit on each of the four tests from essay questions. Those assignments, and especially the Journal Research Report, will be graded not only on their content but also on their grammar. It has been my experience that many students either never learned English grammar in primary and secondary school, or quickly forgot what they learned. Their grades on the course writing assignments sometimes suffer severely as a consequence.

To address that problem, I assign Gucker's *Essentials of English Grammar* and Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*, but those are of little use if students don't study them. To encourage the study of those texts, and especially Gucker, therefore, I give a ten-minute in-class writing assignment every Friday, beginning with the first Friday of the semester. Each of these will consist of about ten items and will cover one or more chapters in Gucker. They will receive a grade of zero through ten, and collectively will comprise fifteen percent of your semester grade. **There will be NO make-ups for missed Friday writing assignments for anything other than a University activity, and any missed assignments will receive a grade of zero.**