In this course, you will learn to write arguments; more specifically, you will learn how to take a position and defend it. To do this requires practice, patience, and a willingness to question. I can’t promise that by the end of this course you’ll be able to argue like Noam Chomsky, but hopefully you’ll take some significant steps in that direction. By the end of the course, you should be able to take a clear position on an issue, find arguments to support that position, organize your ideas effectively, anticipate and respond to counter-arguments, read your own papers objectively and critically, check your own grammar and sentence-structure, and develop strong persuasive techniques in your writing. Hopefully, too, you will begin to develop your own style, your own voice, so that your writing entertains even as it informs, causing your reader to smile and nod approvingly as, feet on the divan and illegal Cuban cigar in hand, he (or she, but how many women smoke cigars, Cuban or otherwise?) moves joyfully through your essay.

If you need work on basic grammar and sentence-structure, the class should help you to improve in both these areas. You will find yourself joyfully engaged in some very edifying grammar exercises.

In the process, you’ll learn a lot about educational issues and learn how to discuss them more effectively. Though we will focus on your writing, all writers need something to write about, an area to cover; in this course, we will “cover” some issues and problems related to education. However, those issues and problem serve only as means to an end: the improvement of your writing.

You will write three major papers (and numerous drafts thereof) and at least three shorter papers. Some of the latter will not deal with educational issues per se, but will serve as exercises that encourage you to work with some of the tools and skills relevant to argumentative writing (e.g. syllogisms, dealing with counter-arguments, grammar and sentence-structure, distinguishing between description/summary and argument).

I. GRADES: I will not grade on a curve or on improvement. I will use the following formula to calculate your final grade:

First major paper - 10%
Second major paper - 20%*
Third major paper - 20%**
Other assignments - 30***
Grammar quiz - 10%****
Class participation - 10%

* You’ll only have a couple of weeks for the first paper – not much time. Some of the grades may turn out rather low. If you do better on the second paper, for which you’ll have twice as much time, we can ignore the first grade and have the second paper count 30% as long as I feel convinced that on your first paper you gave what some have called “the old college try.”
** You won't have all that much time for the third paper. We may do little or no workshopping for this assignment. You'll need to apply to your third paper the skills you've developed while working on the first two papers.
Most of these will involve essay writing. You may find yourself taking a quiz on some of the reading material, but the quiz will consist of essays.

You’ll have two grammar quizzes, one early in the term and one at the end. You can take the higher grade of the two. You must get at least 60% on one of these quizzes in order to pass the course. You must get at least 70% on one of them in order to get a “C” in the course.

II. ATTENDANCE: You can miss three classes without hurting your grade. Each absence after the third may lower your final grade: a C might magically transform into a C- if you have 4 absences, a D+ if you have 5 absences, and so on. You must make up all work missed due to absence, but I won’t chase you down to give you the assignments. Those arriving after the roll has been taken may attend class, but every two such instances may count as one absence. If you arrive late, make sure I’ve marked you present.

If miss a week or more due to illness (thus using up, in one fell but not-entirely pleasant swoop, all your absences), discuss your situation with me.

III. WORKLOAD: You’ll write three major papers and several minor ones. You may also have to write short summaries or critiques of various essays.

IV. LATE PAPERS: I will accept late papers, but I will mark them down at the rate of one grade-increment for every day late. (For example, if the paper is due at 10:00 AM Monday and you turn it in at 10:01, your A turns into an A-. It turns into a B+ at the same time Tuesday, and so forth.) Writers have to deal with deadlines, so I take those deadlines seriously. Sometimes the pressure of a deadline forces a writer to produce quality work. (I have heard that the pressure of deadlines has driven some writers to drink, but these cases have occurred mostly on the East Coast.)

V. PARTICIPATION: We will do a lot of workshopping, reading and orally critiquing student papers. Try to contribute. Why? Oral work can help you to clarify your ideas. Also, it can help your grade. (No-one will lose points for not contributing, however.)

VI. PLAGIARISM: I won’t tolerate plagiarism in any form. If you plagiarize, you will receive an F on the paper and may have to leave the course.

VII. GRAMMAR AND SPELLING: If more than two spelling or grammatical errors occur in your final paper, your grade may suffer. An A paper may magically transform into an A- with the third error, a B+ with the fourth, a B with the fifth, and so forth. Because I don’t grade drafts, students often say, “Oh yeah. I know. I won’t make that mistake on my final paper.” Alas, they often do make “that mistake” on their final papers. Great sadness results! I would therefore recommend that you make every effort to write and spell correctly on your drafts. Like cigarette smoking, good writing is habit forming.

VIII. TEXTS: Obedience to Authority, by Stanley Milgram; Deschooling Society, by Ivan Illich, Great Dialogues of Plato, translated by W.H.D. Rouse; other texts as assigned.

IX. LIMITS: I reserve the right to limit the number of times I critique your papers. Most likely, I will critique no more than one version of your first paragraph, one version of each of your support-sections, and one version of your conclusion. An in-class critique counts as one of these critiques.
X. SUNDRY: Type all written work (including drafts). Serious and less-than-serious studies have shown that typed work drastically improves the disposition of university instructors, and sometimes the clarity of student writing as well. You will often need to provide a copy of your draft for each class-member. Please hand in two copies of the final version of each major paper.

I may not accept a final paper for which I have not seen at least three preliminary drafts.

X. DISABILITIES: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

XI. Ever since the dim times, course guidelines in American universities have been written to sound harsh and unfeeling. In order to uphold tradition, I have made every effort to make these guidelines sound as harsh and unfeeling as possible. Remember, though, that guidelines exist so that you might master the subject matter of the course and so that we have a basis for negotiation should disagreements arise. Even in the twenty-first century, people should get more emphasis than policies, but sometimes we profit from policies that prod us toward perfection. Still, policies often need tempering, for the vicissitudes of life seem many and diverse.

Office hours: to be arranged
Office phone: 303 735-0823 (If you need to reach me, please do not use the WRTG main office number.)
Office location: Temporary Building #1, the room at the head of the stairs, just to your left as you enter the building.
Email: garudadragon1@aol.com. (If you use my university email account, do not expect a response during this century.)