In this course, you will learn to write arguments. You will learn how to take a position and defend it. Though this sounds like a simple process, most people don’t find it so. They find that to write a good argument 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 or write like Jonathan Swift, but hopefully you’ll take some significant steps in that direction. By the end of the course, you should have improved in your ability 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 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 and in some general semantics work which should help you both in writing and critical thinking.

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 problems serve 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 help 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). You will also take a number of quizzes on assigned readings.

I. GRADES: 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 have only 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’m convinced that on your first paper you gave what some people in the dim times used to call “the old college try.”

** We may not do very much workshopping for the third major paper. You'll need to apply to your third paper the skills you've developed while working on the earlier papers.

*** Most of these will involve essay writing, but you will also take some quizzes on reading material. The 30% breaks down into 20% for writing assignments and 10% for quizzes.

**** 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 you 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. (See remarks below under “WEBSITE.”)

III. WORKLOAD: You’ll write three major papers and several minor ones. You will also have to read several essays and perhaps write summaries or critiques of some of them.

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, an A paper due at 10:00 AM Monday magically turns into an A- once 10:00 AM has passed away down the mysterious stream of time. It turns into a B+ once 10:00 AM has done similarly at the same time Tuesday, and so forth.) Writers have to deal with deadlines, so I take 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 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 and may have to leave the course. I intend to use turnitin.com.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information may be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.
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: Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.; selections from A Different Kind of Teacher: Solving the Crisis of American Schooling, by John Taylor Gatto (available in Norlin E-Reserves; Deschooling Society, by Ivan Illich (available online); 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. WEBSITE. I will use CU LEARN. This class has a website there. I will use that website for all emails and other communications. You can also find there all sorts of material relevant to the class: schedules, texts, assignment guidelines, keys to the marks I make on your papers, and various other materials. You should browse through that website and familiarize yourself with its contents. (You may find the website particularly useful if you have to miss classes.)

XI. SUNDRY: Type all written work (including drafts). Serious and not-so-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 turn in two copies – the second an electronic version – 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.

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

XIII. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Campus policy requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, I will make every effort to accommodate all reasonable requests as long as you give me some reasonable lead-time. See details of the university’s general policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.
XIV. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty-members have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

XV. SEXUAL HARASSMENT: The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed may be found at http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/

XVI. 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, we should emphasize people more than policies, but sometimes we profit from policies that prod us toward perfection. Still, policies often need tempering, for the vicissitudes of life often bring on the unexpected.

Office hours: to be arranged
Office phone: 303 735-0823 (Please do not use the PWR main office number.)
Office location: Temporary Building #1, the room just to your left as you enter the building.
Email: Contact me through the course website. You get to that website via CU LEARN.