

Readiness for English 381

As stated, English 381 requires prior literary studies experience and solid essay-writing skills.

Attributes of Someone Suited for English 381

Ideally, a good number of the following statements will apply to you:

- I read voraciously.¹
- I am capable of achieving at least a B+ on an essay of literary analysis.
- If I do not keep and use a writer's journal, I will begin to do so.
- Included in my reading of genre fiction is "only the best."
- I am familiar with, if not proficient in, at least one other language; if not, I understand the importance, as a writer, of making a serious commitment to learning another language.
- I can score at least 90% (preferably higher) on the Athabasca University English Language Assessment (ELA).²
- I understand the professional responsibilities and methods of research.
- I practise and/or enjoy other arts or creative activities.
- I am curious about many things and interested in a range of subjects.
- I am interested in writing original, complex stories and developing my own personal voice.
- I regularly refer to suitable resources on language and style.

¹This reading includes quality literary fiction. For more on this, see Francine Prose's *Reading Like a Writer*.

² ELA is free and available online through the Athabasca University Write Site at www.athabascau.ca/html/services/write-site

Informing the Course Coordinator

If you do not have the stated course prerequisites, it is important when you request course approval to tell the English 381 course coordinator how you believe you have acquired the skills and knowledge developed in these courses, including solid essay-writing skills. You may be asked to submit a short sample of your writing.

For Language Style and Usage

Every writer *needs* a dictionary and a handbook and should make regular and full use of them. For grammar brush-up, AU provides an online English Grammar Handbook at the Write Site at www.athabascau.ca/html/services/write-site. Students also have access to the online Practical English Teacher (PET) at the Write Site.

Assessment Criteria

The following qualities are standard in the assessment of fiction:

- Originality
- Significance
- Creativity
- Entertainment value
- Technical skills
- Effectiveness

In order to come across, the first four qualities depend on the last two: technical skills effectively adapted to the personal voice and intentions of the individual writer. Introductory courses in writing fiction typically examine the art of fiction according to how it creates and uses the following:

- Setting
- Character
- Point of view and voice
- Prose forms
- Structure and pacing
- Tone
- Plot
- Idea and metaphor (objective correlative)

Bringing these methods to life involves close attention to specialized handling of standard storytelling qualities and techniques such as mystery, suspense, surprise and revelation, reversal, resolution, believability, and unity. Other detailed skills come into play, such as representing speech and thoughts according to various narrative stances. English 381 encourages you to practise these techniques in creating character-driven stories in realistic settings that you can make convincing.