



# ENGL 102: Academic Essay & Research Paper Writing Syllabus



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**Instructor:** Mr. David M. Merchant  
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## Course Description, Objectives, and Theme

Welcome to English 102: Academic Essay and Research Paper Writing.

### Prerequisites

English 101 (or the honors or transfer equivalent). It is your responsibility to make sure you are in the right class. You will also need basic computer and Internet skills. It is assumed that you already have basic knowledge and skill in grammar, punctuation, style, and usage as well as a willingness to identify and work on your own problem areas in and out class (for example, going to the Writing Center).

College is not high school—we want you to level up. High school is like playing a video game in Easy Mode. That is a good level for a beginner, but with college you are entering higher education—thus a higher level. College, then, is like playing in Normal Mode, without any cheat codes, with the goal of having you play at Hard Mode, without cheat codes or even walkthroughs, by the time you graduate. You will need to access previously learned skills and then build on them to level up. I look at you as adults who are working on the goal of becoming professionals.

*“When I was a child, I spoke like a child and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish ways.” – 1:Cor:13:11*

Do not expect Freshman English classes to be plug-and-play, paint-by-the-numbers, or rote memorization classes. We expect you to learn to critically think, and to incorporate and synthesize and not just regurgitate information or mimic procedures. Thus, it should be no surprise that what passed for an A in high school will *not* pass for an A in college.

### Objectives

This class will introduce you to the research process through writing about literature. We will use critical thinking skills—skills required by all majors—to analyze and evaluate literary texts and criticisms. You will learn more about what makes an effective university-level essay and will know some strategies that can improve your papers in content, organization, word choice, grammar, and mechanics. You will be more familiar with the research process, with MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style, with a variety of literary genres and works, and with different ways of interpreting them. You will be challenged in this course, but in a good way. Be open to the learning process, stretch yourself, and absorb all of the nuances of the material. It will serve you well in the course of your education.

## Theme

According to Joseph Campbell, as detailed in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the circular hero journey is a universal motif. At the end of his adventure, the hero returns to his starting point having gained physical, moral or psychological maturity. As T.S. Eliot wrote in “The Little Gidding”:  
“And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time” (5. 27-29). While we will use other critical approaches (formalist, biographical, psychoanalytic, reader-response, historical, Marxist, feminist, etc.), we will return often to the hero’s journey. We will be looking for the hero journey in our readings, and the hero journey in our own life.

## Course Materials

*The Norton Introduction to Literature*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition. ISBN: 978-0-393-93891-3. **Note:** Make sure it is the 12th edition. Different editions contain different readings.

*Freshman Composition Course Packet, 2016 - 2017*. **Note:** Available only at the Louisiana Tech Bookstore: <<http://latech.bncollege.com/>>. This packet is revised yearly.

*A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. An electronic copy will be provided to you; however, if you want to have a hard copy, an inexpensive text is the Dover Thrift Edition (unabridged); it costs \$2.32 for softcover and \$0.90 for Kindle version (as of Nov 2016) from Amazon.com: <[www.amazon.com/Christmas-Carol-Dover-Thrift-Editions/dp/0486268659](http://www.amazon.com/Christmas-Carol-Dover-Thrift-Editions/dp/0486268659)>. Also, your local library may have a copy you can check out.

I recommend you have a dictionary and a thesaurus. You will also need reliable access to Microsoft Word, Tech email, Moodle, and Turnitin.com..

## About Your Instructor

I welcome you to our class and hope for a stimulating and productive term. I am Mr. David M. Merchant, your assigned instructor. The following is the extent of my credentials:

- 2009 Graduate Certificate, Technical Writing (Louisiana Tech University)
- 2006 MA, English Literature (Louisiana Tech University)
- 1997 MS, Information Science (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
- 1992 BA, English Literature (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)
- 1984 Certification, Naval Nuclear Power Plant Operator (US Navy)

My work experience includes US Navy electrician and nuclear engineering technician, Web master, systems librarian, and technology specialist. Presently, I am an Instructor of English and Technology Coordinator for the School of Literature and Language.

## Attendance Policy

Attendance is an obligation: <[www.latech.edu/administration/policies-and-procedures/2206.shtml](http://www.latech.edu/administration/policies-and-procedures/2206.shtml)>. Tech seeks to prepare students for leadership; learning to schedule appointments and vacations so they do not conflict with class is part of maturing toward leadership. Attendance is recorded at the *start* of

class. For online classes, attendance is taken via logging in every class day as well as prompt participation in assigned forums or completion of quizzes. If you know you are going to have trouble attending regularly, you should drop the class before the drop/add date and take the class later when your schedule will allow you to attend regularly.

Since helping students develop a stronger sense of responsibility for their choices is promoted by accountability, there are non-negotiable penalties for showing up late and for being absent.

### **Tardies and Early Departures**

Punctuality is a university requirement and a courtesy to me and your fellow students (being late disrupts a class). Leaving class before it is officially dismissed is the same as being late (you can, of course, take restroom breaks). Each tardy lowers your attendance grade. If you miss roll, make sure you are marked late and not absent by seeing me after class; the next class period is too late.

### **Absences**

Absences have a negative effect on your learning process and the class. Each absence earns zero points toward your attendance grade. After two weeks of unexcused absences (one week for summer quarters) you will fail the course no matter what your current class standing is. You are responsible for keeping track of your absences.

**Exceptions.** Verifiable university-excused absences that you have cleared with me in advance or a verifiable university-sanctioned family emergency (the Dean of Liberal Arts calls me) will give you a grace period (determined on a case-by-case basis). Otherwise, there are no exceptions. Blame it on bad luck, the psychic manipulations of Cthulhu, or the indifference of a chaotic universe. It happens to the best of us (I have been there a few times myself).

**Incompletes.** If the excessive absences occur at the end of the quarter, an incomplete may be arranged. However, the English Department is restrictive regarding incompletes.

### **Absent / Tardy Instructor Policy**

If I am absent (more than 20 minutes late), notices will be posted on the classroom door(s) and on Moodle. If the absence arises at the last minute, someone from the English Department will come and let you know. Class will continue through Moodle.

### **Expectation of Outside-of-Class Work**

This course requires a lot of work—in and out of class. Critical reading and academic writing are involved, interconnected processes. Writing is an involved process for any writer. To do well, you must devote enough time to complete assignments accurately and effectively. Do not expect an “inflation” of the grade based on effort. If you find you are dedicating a substantial number of hours outside of class to assignments and are still struggling, please come see me to discuss your concerns.

### **Assignments**

Four analytical literary essays make up 75% of your grade. Each has a minimum page count; quotes do

not count toward your page count (you will not be able to pad your paper with quotes to get away with less original writing). The following is an overview and not enough instruction by itself for fulfilling the assignments; more details for each paper will be provided separately in class and on Moodle.

**Essay 1.** The first essay will be a reader-response paper on *A Christmas Carol*. This essay will be 2–3 pages long, *plus* a Work Cited page (for the primary source; no secondary sources requested).

**Essay 2.** The second essay will be on *A Christmas Carol*. You can analyze the novella or compare it to stories, plays, or poems from the *Norton* text or on Moodle. This essay will be 6–7 pages long, *plus* a Works Cited page(s) with **a minimum of 5 secondary sources** (in addition to the primary sources).

**Essay 3.** The third essay will be on one short story, poem, or play from the *Norton* text or Moodle readings. This essay will be 3–4 pages long, *plus* a Works Cited page, and have a minimum of 2 secondary sources (in addition to the primary source); you can use relevant essays from the *Norton* text as secondary sources.

**Essay 4.** The final essay will be a literary compare-contrast essay: two to three short stories, poems, or plays from the *Norton* text or Moodle readings. You can mix, for example, compare and contrast a play and a poem. You can build upon your second essay—that is, you can use the short story, poem, or play from Essay 3 as the one you are comparing another story, poem, or play to. This essay will be 3–5 pages long, *plus* a Works Cited page, and have a minimum of 2 secondary sources (in addition to the 2 to 3 primary sources); you can use relevant essays from the *Norton* text as secondary sources.

### **Peer Reviews**

Each essay will be peer-reviewed where you will receive comments from your peer readers. You will then revise your paper; this second write will be graded. **For Peer Reviews you must bring to class a clean print copy of a typed, double-spaced, rough draft of sufficient completeness** (Drafts should be as full and complete as if you were to be graded, as much as possible)—an inadequate rough draft will lower your final draft grade by 5%, a missing rough draft will lower it by 10%.

### **Quizzes**

Quizzes will make up 5% of your grade. Quizzes will be over readings or grammar. Some will be announced while others will be pop quizzes. In-class assignments are short assignments/ activities.

### **Discussion**

Discussion, in-class and via online forums, will account for 15% of your grade.

### **Bonus Points**

Attending the Writing Center earns you 3 bonus points for each visit, up to a total of 15 bonus points. I am informed by the Writing Center every time you attend (even when attending via Skype). For more information, see the Writing Center section below.

## **Grading Standards and Grading Points Distribution**

Employers take a negative view of poor writing and communication skills, especially for a college graduate. Your work and your ideas will be judged in no small part by how well you communicate in

your profession. Consequently, my standards for are high. Your level of work you perform is expected to build and improve with each assignment.

### Scoring

Your final score converts to a grade by this formula:

A = 90 - 100%

B = 80 - 89%

C = 70 - 79%

D = 60 - 69%

F = 0 - 59%

Plagiarism = 0%

The grade you earn on a paper is not a cumulative grade, nor does it assess your character. Grades are not negotiable. Keep track of your grades; stay aware of your progress.

### My Philosophy Regarding Rounding Up

Rounding up is unfair. For example, one diligent student gets an 80 for a final grade while another diligent student gets a 79 for a final grade. Both have impartially earned the grades that they have. To round up the 79 to an 80 is unfair to the one who earned the 80, for the extra grade given from the rounding up is not one that is earned.

### Rubric

In addition to the English Department's grading polices found in your *Freshman Composition Course Packet*, I grade essays according to my course rubric which can be found on Moodle as well as at my course Wordpress site: <<http://davidmmerchant.com>>.

### Grading Method

Each writing assignment will be judged using the course rubric as a criteria analysis. I will look at each criterion and determine what rating the assignment has earned based by how well the assignment meets that criterion. Each criterion is weighted, so I will multiple the points earned for that criterion by its weight. I will then add the total weighted criteria points earned. Next, any relevant deductions (late penalties, for instance) will be applied.

The maximum possible **criteria points** for any assignment is 40 points, so I will convert the total criteria points earned to a percentage by dividing the criteria points earned by 40, and then multiply that percentage against the assignment's maximum grade points. Recall that failing any of the grading criteria will fail the paper no matter how well it fares in the other criteria.

For example, one student's second essay (200 points maximum), earns a Good (3 points) for the Literary Analysis criterion, a Fair (2 points) for the Mechanics criteria, and Exceptional (4 points) for the rest. The student has no grading deductions. The student's second essay would then receive a 80 percent, thus getting 160 points marked down in the grade book:

1. Intro/Thesis + Organization + Analysis + Language + Mechanics = criteria points
2. (4 points)(2 weight) + (4)(2) + (4)(3) + (4)(1) + (2)(2) = 8 + 8 + 12 + 4 = 32 criteria points
3. 32 criteria points earned ÷ 40 criteria points possible = 0.80 or 80%.
4. (0.80)(200 maximum assignment points) = 160 assignment points.

Since one course goal is for you to continue becoming self-learners and self-editors, while I will count off for each error I find, I may not mark in a document every specific instance of every type of error (but will at least mark the first instance). I will give helpful comments, however, to help you revise. You will then need to review your graded document to find and correct the errors. During class workshops, I can help you help yourself in this matter; I **strongly** recommend that you regularly visit the Writing Center. Proofread repeatedly: for instance, proofread for content, proofread for style and formatting, proofread for grammar, and then proofread for punctuation. Do not wait until the last minute to work on an assignment. And do not wait to the last minute to visit the Writing Center (they can fill up).

### Revision

If you score an F or a D on the *first* essay, you may rewrite it for a chance to increase its grade to a C. To be fair to other students, first essays that were not submitted, submitted incomplete, or were plagiarized, are not eligible to be revised. You must go to the Writing Center and receive help with the rewriting (online classes can contact the Writing Center via Skype). Include with your revision (after your Works Cited page) the following:

- A brief (two to three paragraphs) statement describing the major revisions you made and commenting on the reasons that you made these changes.
- A brief reflection about what you learned as a result of the process of revising.

You must submit your rewrite to Turnitin.com *within* one week after your first writing assignment grade is posted. No rewrites will be accepted after (sorry, no exceptions).

### So, what is an A paper?

An A paper is more than good, it is **excellent**. It is difficult to improve. It is the result of effort and dedication to the writing process. It not only fulfills the assignment on time, it demonstrates insight and originality (not mere mimicry) and evidence of attention to detail. It adheres to American English grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage. It follows the assignment's formatting requirements exactly. The information is presented ethically, clearly, and comprehensively in an easy and persuasive manner. The reader feels not only informed, but meaningfully taught as well. It is like Mary Poppins: Practically Perfect in Every Way.

### Late / Make-up Work

Deadlines are often nonnegotiable in the professional world. No matter how well you did the work, technical documents often need to be available by a specific time. Missing a deadline means losing a contract, customer, grant, or your job. Submitting work late is unprofessional as often others are depending on your work for their own deadlines (including instructors who need to grade in time for students to review before their next assignment is due). You need to submit work on time.

*"You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page."— Jodi Picoult*

For the above reasons, as well as to be fair to those who submit their work on time, work submitted after the due date, but before midnight of the due date, forfeits a half-letter grade per 24-hour period. Work submitted after that will forfeit a full-letter grade for every 24-hour period. Rare exception: If you have a verifiable university-excused absence, which you have cleared with me in advance, or a verifiable

university-sanctioned family emergency absence (the Dean of Liberal Arts calls me), you can have a one-day, and one-day only, grace period from late penalties.

Missed quizzes, forum deadlines, and in-class work cannot be made up for any reason. Again, we are preparing you to become mature professionals. You will find many courses at Tech will have similar, even stricter, policies regarding late work. Never wait until the last minute.

### Grading Points Distribution

Assignment	Points
Essay #1: on <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	100 points
Essay #2: on <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	300 points
Essay #3: on short fiction/poetry/drama	150 points
Essay #4: on short fiction/poetry/drama	200 points
Discussion, in-class and online forums	150 points
Quizzes (lowest quiz score dropped)	50 points
Attendance	50 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

### Grade appeals

In the event of a question regarding a final grade, it will be the responsibility of the student to keep and present graded materials that have been returned during the quarter.

### Final Notes on Grading

The first paper in writing classes usually causes hurt feelings. Before the first grades are in, your instructor is Obi Wan, Yoda, Ned Stark, or even Jar-Jar Binks. Then the first grade is posted and your instructor is revealed to be Darth Vader, or Joffrey Baratheon. The grades can be bad because you do not know how high the grading bar is yet. You do not know how high the bar is until you run up to it and try to jump over. If you fall on the first paper, dust yourself off and get up again. Use it as a diagnostic to help you improve. Your quarter's fate has not been sealed by the first grade. If you do well on the first paper, do not become satisfied with your work: look to improve or you may take a hit on the next assignment as assignments increase in difficulty and complexity. Learn to draft, review, revise, and edit as a normal part of professional writing—the type of writing your future employers expect.

*Easy reading is damned hard writing.* – Nathaniel Hawthorne

Do not recite to me lists of reasons why you have to get an A or B; I do know what it is like to be a student and to desire to make an A (I still take classes). However, while an A is possible, not everyone will earn one. I evaluate your coursework, not your life circumstances or your worth (great people struggle with writing). You are not entitled to a grade because you are graduating, or your financial aid depends upon it, or because you have never gotten less than an A or B before. Successive courses often prove to be successively more difficult, therefore past performance is not a perfect indicator of future performance. To be fair to everyone, I must grade with no partiality. I am not hired to “give out” grades. All A grades must be earned through hard work and not tossed out like Mardi Gras beads.

**Technical difficulties**

Technical difficulties are not acceptable excuses for not having your work. Be professional: save and back up your work often on a thumbdrive, the cloud, or external hard drive in case of computer failure so that you can submit it from another computer or smart device.

**Paper Guidelines (Style Sheet)**

1. We use MLA style for formatting and documentation.
2. Typed papers are to be in Times New Roman, size 12 font, on standard 8 ½" by 11" white paper.
3. Handwritten papers will not be accepted (except for in-class assignments).
4. In-class papers must be written in black or blue ink.
5. All essays must be double-spaced and use margins of ONE inch for all margins.
6. Do not use a cover sheet.
7. Use the following format for the first page:

Page number, in Arabic numeral(s)

Last Name #

Your Name

English 101 - section number

Mr. Merchant

Date in month day, year format (for example, May 21, 2011)

Essay #

Your Original Title

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut “Klaatu barada nikto!” Gort quis nostrud “treguna, mekoides, et tracorumsatis dee.” Sed eiusmod elit.

8. Put page numbers in the header for each page. Put your last name before the page number.
9. Use American English for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.
10. Do not bold, italicize, underline, or place your essay title in quotation marks; exception: use italics or quotation marks when referring to other works in your title. Write the title in Title Case.
11. You can sparingly use italics and exclamation marks for emphasis. Try to use no more than one exclamation mark per essay.
12. Works Cited page begins at the top of a page after the last page of your essay.
13. Any hard copies submitted must be stapled (and no, I do not bring a stapler).

**Academic Honesty**

*Being a student of a higher standard, I pledge to embody the principles of academic integrity (Section Two of the Louisiana Tech Academic Honor Code).*

### **Plagiarism Zero Tolerance**

The University has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. View college as if you were employed by a professional company. As an employee, you are ethically bound to work with professionalism and integrity. The first occurrence of plagiarism is a grade of zero on that assignment. The second occurrence is an F for the course and a referral to the Office of Student Life.

### **Plagiarism Statements**

You must complete, sign, and turn in the Plagiarism Statement *for the current quarter* located in the current *Freshman Composition Course Packet* to me by the deadline stated in the Course Schedule. By School policy, I cannot grade your essays without this signed Statement submitted beforehand. The English Department places a hold on your Tech Account until the signed Statement is submitted. Online students, send the signed Statement by certified mail or delivery confirmation to the address below:

Louisiana Tech University  
Dept. of English  
Attention: David M. Merchant  
Railroad Ave GTMH 236 (PO Box 3162)  
Ruston, LA 71272-0001

### **Other Dishonesty**

Dishonesty or attempts at dishonesty by false or misleading information when documenting an emergency absence is an ethical violation, and a violation of the University Academic Honor Code (Section Three) which will result in a referral to the Office of Student Life.

### **Moodle and Turnitin.com**

Tech uses the Moodle system for course management. Check Moodle, including the News Forum, regularly for class updates. Tech uses Turnitin.com to check student papers. Instructions are on the class Moodle page. Submit documents only in Microsoft Word to keep the required formatting.

### **Writing Center and Online Writing Lab**

Tech's Writing Center, located in Wyly Tower Room 325, is an excellent resource for writers of all levels. You can call 257-4477 to schedule an appointment or to ask a quick grammar question during normal business hours. Online classes can set up consultations via Skype. For more information, including hours of operation, visit <http://www.latech.edu/barc/writing-center/>.

### **ESL (English as Second Language) Writers**

While some non-Western cultures tend to be indirect in their writing, Western style requires directness (straightforward and to the point) and having clear examples that prove your position or opinion, as well as a preference for active voice. Also, Western cultures have a strict definition for plagiarism—please make sure you understand the Western definition and attitude toward plagiarism as the penalties for plagiarism are harsh. I recommend ESL writers regularly use the Writing Center and the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>, especially their ESL Instructors and Students resources at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/678/01/>.

## Office Hours Policy

My office hours are posted on Moodle and on my office door (GTMH 274). It is best if you setup an appointment with me before visiting my office. If you phone me during my office hours, I may not be immediately available as I may be helping someone else or have temporarily stepped out.

## Technology Use Policy (GTMH 211-A / GTMH 211-B)

Treat this class as if you are a professional working for a company: be focused on the job at hand, use the equipment with care, and use the computers only for class work. **Multitasking is a myth:** while you feel productive, studies show you are 40 percent less productive; thus, do not use social media or entertainment software or devices (you may use them during breaks). **Exception:** you can listen to music (via earphones) during workshops. If you have an emergency that requires you to monitor your phone, let me know at the start of class and set the phone to vibrate.

## Email/Moodle Messaging Policy

Tech email is slow and spam filters do not always work. I do not constantly check my email. I am, however, on Moodle often. Thus, the best way is to contact via Moodle.

### To post questions about the course

Use the *Course Questions Forum* on Moodle to post questions that you may have related to the course. Please feel free to answer a classmate's question should you know the answer. Remember, often a question you have, others in the class also have.

### For messages you need to send only to me

My email is at the top of this syllabus. If you send email, use business etiquette: identify who you are, what class you are in, and use a helpful subject line. Do not send emails with questions that are already answered in the syllabus (see below for more detail). To help encourage good email communication, if I receive an email that does not follow business etiquette, I will respond only with a request that you resend it—I will be happy to reply once I have received your email with all the necessary information.

Use my Moodle user profile to send a message; instructions are on Moodle. I try to response within 24 hours during the school week. I do not check email or Moodle after 5 p.m. on weekdays, nor on Saturdays (my social media Sabbath) or holidays (Hey, I do have a bit of a life outside Tech.)

### Do Not Send the Following Kinds of Messages

There are several types of emails/Moodle messages I will not answer.

- **Messages that ask what will be/was discussed in class when you are absent.** The course schedule has the due dates and what material will be covered.
- **Messages that ask me to look at an entire assignment.** I will not read the entire draft of your work. That defeats one of the goals of this class. Have *specific* questions in mind.
- **Messages that ask me to submit your assignment for you because of computer problems.** Be professional and do not wait until the last minute to submit your assignment.

- *Messages that ask for an extension on the due date.* See the “Late Work” section above.
- *Messages that ask my progress in grading an assignment.* During regular quarters, the turnover rate is a full week. During summer quarters, the turnover rate is three to five days.
- *Messages that ask me to regrade because you are disappointed with your grade.* I am disappointed too. See “Final Notes on Grading” above.
- *Messages asking for a particular final grade or rounding of your final grade average.* See the “Final Notes on Grading” section above.



## IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

**Figure 1. “It's in the syllabus”**

Source: Cham, Jorge. “Piled Higher and Deeper.” Comic strip. 31 August 2014. Web. 10 May 2013.

### Special Accommodations

If you need accommodations regarding the class due to disability or other need, please see me as soon as possible. For more information about eligibility for accommodations, contact:

Testing and Disability Services  
 318 Wylly Tower  
 318-257-4221  
<http://www.latech.edu/ods/>

### Emergency Contingency Plan

If we are not able to meet as a class, we will continue with this course through our Moodle website. Please check Moodle regularly. You are encouraged to enroll and update your contact information in the Emergency Notification System at [www.latech.edu/administration/ens.shtml](http://www.latech.edu/administration/ens.shtml).

### Course Schedule

Assignments will be posted on Moodle in the Course Schedule folder. This schedule may (probably will) be modified during the quarter as situations warrant. Any necessary changes will be posted in the News Forum section, so check it regularly. All items marked **DUE**, **READ**, and **QUIZ** are to be finished

*before* class begins, unless otherwise noted (for online classes, classes begin at 10 am). Remember, you are responsible for any changes to the schedule made by the instructor in class or posted on Moodle.

## Study Contract

This syllabus is a contract between you (as the student) and me (as the instructor). By taking this class, you are agreeing to follow the guidelines given above, to be evaluated by the requirements of this syllabus, and to follow the Louisiana Tech University Honor Code.



**Figure 2. “I Don’t Need to Study!”**

Source: Bill Watterson. “Calvin and Hobbes.” Comic Strip. *GoComics*. 8 Oct. 1993.  
[www.gocomics.com/calvinandhobbes/2013/10/08](http://www.gocomics.com/calvinandhobbes/2013/10/08)

## The Trends of Student Behavior

*The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places. – Author Unknown*

There is an unfortunate trend of student behavior: self-sabotage. Having taught this course for a considerable amount of time, my experience has shown that such situations are easily avoidable. You can only imagine the number of times I have heard things like:

- “My computer crashed on me.”
- “My printer would not allow me to print the assignment how I actually formatted it.”
- “I’ve had a lot going on this quarter.”
- “A [sibling, roommate, friend] borrowed my laptop with my assignment on it.”
- “I got into a fight with my [significant other], and I just couldn’t concentrate enough to finish the assignment.”

The list goes on and on from there. Look, let us be frank. The campus has several computer labs for use. The BARC<sup>1</sup> is available for help with time management and study skills. The Counseling Center<sup>2</sup> is available for emotional or psychological health and for responsible decision-making. Bottom line: things happen, but as adults, we have responsibilities. As a university student, you should become a prudent

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.latech.edu/barc/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.latech.edu/students/counseling/>

planner, anticipating the unexpected and preparing for the worst, should it occur, to meet deadlines. Your future boss will not accept such situations as justifiable excuses for not getting your work done.

I am very happy to assist my students. However, ***I am not going to do something that will call into question my job performance, or erode my ethical integrity or the integrity of the class.*** You are the “captains of your destinies,” and the choices you make, the situations you create, and the positive or negative consequences that arise because of them are in *your* hands and are ultimately your responsibility. Do not call on me to curve those consequences.