**JCO 1103 WRITING SKILLS I**

**COURSE NAME: WRITING SKILLS I COURSE CODE: JCO 1103**

**CREDIT UNITS: 3**

**CONTACT HOURS: 45**

**TYPE OF COURSE: CORE**

**Course Description:**

This introductory course imparts basic writing skills focusing on grammar and syntax and incorporates narrative, descriptive, and explanatory methods. It is based on the principle that mastery of basic writing skills is the foundation for developing writing competencies for specialized purposes especially the media. Students learn to write in a way that effectively communicates ideas. It enables students to develop the motivation for writing and to master the fundamentals of good writing. Students are engaged in small-scale but regular writing practice in and outside the classroom. While they might start to write for all sorts of styles, the students will eventually be writing for publication. The course prepares students for higher levels of writing competence introduced in Writing Skills II.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To master the principles of composition and style.

2. To develop the power of observation.

3. To discover how to find significant ideas.

4. To improve a student’s basic writing skills.

5. To develop students’ critical and creative potential.

6. Appreciate the importance of planning and deadlines in publishing.

**Course Outline:**

**1. Introduction**

• Motivation for writing

• Sources of ideas - where do ideas come from?

• Keeping a writer’s journal

**2. Basic writing principles**

• Being clear, concise, accurate, simple, interesting

• Writing opening sentences/leads/intros and endings

• Sentence length and punctuation

• Writing tone

• Using strong verbs

• The S+V+O principle of writing

• Using quotes

• Using colour- images, similes, metaphors etc

• Clichés and other common writing mistakes

• Observation, narration and description

**3. The art and craft of writing**

• Finding the angle and focus to advance your story and not to digress

• Remembering the theme

• Finding a view point and voice and not preaching or being too opinionated

• Showing, not telling

• Using specific images and not generalizing

• Organisation of a story (beginning, body and end)

• Using active voice and avoiding passive construction

• Using the Third Person narrative style

**4. Style**

• Being clear

• Placing yourself in the background

• Writing naturally

• Writing with nouns and verbs: Avoiding excessive use of adverbs and adjectives

• Being your own editor; revising and re-writing your copy

• Not overstating

• Avoiding qualifiers

• Avoiding being a show-off a affecting a breezy manner

• Avoiding fancy words and phrases- being pretentious

• Writing formally versus other kinds of writing

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Know what it takes to get their work published.

2. Know a good idea to write about when they see one.

3. Write clearly, taking into consideration grammar, punctuation and style.

4. Write critically and creatively.

5. Appreciate the need to adhere to deadlines.

**Methods of Teaching/Delivery:**

• Interactive lectures

• Critique of each other’s work

• Discussion

• Writing workshops

• Writing journals

**Methods of Assessment:**

• Coursework of at least 3 assignments will constitute 40%

• Final examination will account for 60%

**Readings/Reference Materials/Learning Resources:**

1. The Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White. This book can also be accessed online at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

2. The 29 Common Writing Mistakes and How to Avoid Them by Judy

Denton

3. If I can write, You Can Write by Charlie Shedd

4. William Zinsser. 1994. On Writing Well (5th Ed) Harper Collins

5. A good English dictionary with British English

6. A good thesaurus or a book of synonyms.

Online resources

1. Dumb little man: <http://www.dumblittleman.com/2006/10/50-tools-that-can->increase-your-writing.html

2. Dictionary.com: [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com/)

3. [http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing\_Center/WCWritingResource.](http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/Writing_Center/WCWritingResource) htm