

Course Syllabus

Preparing for Graduate Success: Language, Culture, and Community at U-M Summer 2025 (July 14-August 10)

Congratulations on your admission to your graduate program at the University of Michigan. And welcome to “PGS,” Preparing for Graduate Success. This highly personal, interactive online course prepares you to succeed in your U-M graduate studies by exploring campus culture, resources and language use for graduate study and research. From your instructor, Pamela Bogart, you will get lots of individualized feedback on features of language you would like to enhance. You will establish an early network of friends. Every step of the way, you will explore how to enhance your communication repertoire (what you can do with language) to achieve your academic, scholarly, and professional goals.

In this dynamic four-week course, you will respond to brief articles, watch and interact with short videos, even create videos yourself, and participate in engaging discussions that will familiarize you with a range of features of graduate life and academics at this large research university. You will have many opportunities to hone and refine your language skills through practice assignments and through interactions with classmates.

There is also an optional group project. Those who elect to do this activity often find it one of the most rewarding experiences in the course.

Objectives

By completing the course, you should enhance your ability to

- Express the identity you wish to project in various English language contexts
- Initiate social conversations in English to meet new friends and colleagues
- Formulate an engaging “elevator pitch” about your graduate studies, in order to network with others before and after arrival on campus
- Use English effectively to negotiate roles and express opinions, e.g. to determine responsibilities and collaborate successfully in a group assignment

- Identify how to use generative AI tools and other digital resources ethically and effectively to improve your academic communication
- Navigate the process of attribution and citation in your academic discipline, including writing from source materials and any use of generative AI tools
- Participate in campus conversations about equality, climate, and improving the U-M experience for all students

Your Instructor

Pamela Bogart, Lecturer IV, English Language Institute

You can send me messages within the Canvas Inbox or email (pbogart@umich.edu) anytime during the online course, and I hope very much to meet you in person after you arrive in Ann Arbor.

Community Commitments for Inclusive Participation

How can we create an online community together for this course that is caring, inclusive of everyone in the course, intellectually challenging, and boosts everyone's confidence in using English in graduate school?

We are soon going to be posting a video self-intro so that we can get started speaking in English together right away. Sharing a video with strangers, however, can feel kind of stressful. Thus, before we begin to post videos, we want to foster an inclusive, respectful community and to transform ourselves from strangers into new friends.

Here is a starting set of Community Commitments for our ongoing collaboration. These ideas were generated by students in PGS and other ELI courses over the past few years, with initial advice from "*Guidelines for Dialogue*," The Program on Intergroup Relations, University of Michigan. We will allow these guidelines to evolve as we discuss them and build a dynamic, inclusive learning community together. The live Canvas version of this Syllabus will be updated accordingly during our course.

1. Maintaining Privacy

We will not share any information about anyone else in the class or anything they post, electronically or otherwise. We will be submitting informal audio/video recordings, and these should never be re-posted anywhere else.

2. Learning from one another

We will listen to each other and respond to each other, not just look for opportunities to make our own points. We realize that the differences among us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values will increase our awareness and understanding.

3. Valuing one another's perspectives

We will not demean, devalue, or "put down" people for their experiences, lack of experiences or difference in interpretation of those experiences. In other words, **always respect classmates** (which is true for 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 too).

4. Challenging ideas, not people

If we wish to challenge or disagree with something that has been said (or written), we will be careful to talk about the idea, not the individual person sharing this idea.

5. Balancing participation

We will be mindful of taking up much more space than others, standing back if needed to maintain balance. We will step up to contribute when others are dominating the conversation (spoken or written) or group effort.

6. Reading/listening before posting to discussions

By reading and listening to what's already been posted before joining online discussions, we can frame our contributions as deepening or broadening the conversation, not just repeating what has been said. This approach will make discussions both more efficient and more productive.

7. Being sensitive to diverse beliefs and identities

Topics involving beliefs or identity such as religion, sexual orientation, nationality, race, or political views should be discussed with extra care to express respect and empathy. It will be important to use Community Commitments 1-6 to interact thoughtfully with one another.

8. Crediting our sources, including generative AI tools

When we refer to another person's or organization's words or ideas, we will be sure to credit the source. If we use generative AI tools (like UM-GPT, ChatGPT, Pi, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, DeepSeek, or Grammarly), we will add "composed/edited/brainstormed/[verb-ed] with assistance from [name of tool]" to any such communication. We will also share the initial prompt and a commentary on what genAI suggestions we adopted and rejected and why.

Technical requirements to take this course online

The course is set up in Canvas, available to U-M students at <http://umich.instructure.com>. This is the course platform you will also use in your Fall classes across the university. You will need:

- an internet-capable device that can play video, record voice and video, and upload video files to the course website (You won't be required to participate live on video, but you may optionally join PGS community gatherings via Zoom.)
- for some activities, a laptop or desktop computer may work much better than a phone or tablet
- access to a means to use your U-M email and login (which may require use of the free [U-M MLane](#) or a VPN, depending on where you're taking the course, because U-M email (@umich.edu) is on the Google email platform)

Grading

There are 2,600 possible points in the course. You can choose to focus your attention broadly across the course, or to focus on segments of particular interest to you. Earning at least 80% of this point total constitutes "Completion" of the course. Earning at least 60% constitutes "Active Participation." This is not a credit-bearing course, so there is no passing or failing or letter grade. Instead, the course is graded on degrees of completion. This not-for-credit course is not marked on your transcript. This low-risk, try anything, skip anything approach is described in [this paper from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](#) (CRLT) at U-M.

Course activities include:

- Discussion forums and video-embedded discussions
- Individual reflections on language use and academic cultures
- Language activities, including interactive video and generative AI explorations
- Peer feedback assignments
- Group project (opt-in or opt-out)
- Elevator pitch planning activities, first draft, revised draft, and final video

Plan on setting aside 3-4 hours each week to explore life and communication in graduate school together. I look forward to meeting you and working with you as you design your keys to graduate success at the University of Michigan!

Accommodations

If there is anything you'd like me to know about how you learn best and any accommodations that would support your best learning, please contact me via email or Canvas messaging. I am eager to adapt this course with you to optimize your learning experience.

You are welcome but not required to share with me anything about your learning. Of course I will maintain the confidentiality of any information you share with me.

While some courses require documentation of a disability and registration with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) in order to be eligible for accommodation, that is not the case for this course. We all learn and process information differently, and a small course like this is well-suited for flexibility.

Religious/Cultural Holidays

I encourage you to celebrate religious or cultural holidays that are important to you. Please inform me in advance, in writing, as to how a given holiday will affect your participation schedule, so that we can make advance alternate plans together. In general, due to the flexible nature of this course, you should be able to fully participate while also marking important days on your calendar.

What else the English Language Institute (ELI) can offer you

The [ELI](#) offers a range of credit and non-credit ways to enhance your oral and written communication in English.

Courses

See the [ELI website](#) for a current list of 1-credit and 2-credit mini-course offerings, which are designed to provide rich spaces for exploration of academic written and spoken language throughout your graduate journey at Michigan.

Clinics

The ELI Graduate Speaking Clinic and the ELI Graduate Writing Clinic offer one-on-one consultation on any aspect of speaking or writing you'd like to work on. You can practice for an upcoming presentation, strategize a self-study plan for next summer, or get advice on revising a paper or application, for example. In Fall and Winter, there are also additional clinic hours set aside for current or future GSIs (the GSI Speaking Clinic), and there is a speaking and writing clinic at Taubman specifically for Architecture and Urban Planning students.

Conversation Circles

To practice fluent, everyday social interaction in English, you may be interested in joining a Conversation Circle to communicate in a fun, friendly environment. Conversation Circles are also a great way to learn about life at U-M. Circles meet weekly at a wide range of times and places (including online.)

Student Wellbeing (from the College of LSA)

Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. U-M offers the following resources:

- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)- confidential; 734-764-8312; for after-hours urgent support, call and press 0; counseling, workshops, groups and more, counselors are embedded in some schools
- [Dean of Students Office](#)- 734-764-7420; provides support services to students and manages critical incidents impacting students and the campus community
- [Ginsberg Center for Community Service Learning](#) - 734-763-3548; opportunities to engage as learners and leaders to create a better community and world
- [Multi-ethnic Student Affairs \(MESA\)](#) - 734-763-9044; diversity and social justice through the lens of race and ethnicity
- [Office of Student Conflict Resolution](#) - 734-936-6308; offers multiple pathways for resolving conflict
- [Office of the Ombuds](#) - 734-763-3545; students can raise questions and concerns about the functioning of the university.
- [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#)- 734-763-3000; accommodations and access to students with disabilities
- [Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center \(SAPAC\)](#)- confidential; 734-764-7771 or 24-hour crisis line 734-936-3333; addresses sexual assault, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and stalking
- [Spectrum Center](#)- 734-763-4186; support services for LGBTQ+ students
- [Trotter Multicultural Center](#)- 734-763-3670; intercultural engagement and inclusive leadership education initiatives
- [University Health Service \(UHS\)](#)- 734-764-8320; clinical services include nurse advice by phone, day or night
- [Well-being for U-M Students website](#) - searchable list of many more campus resources
- [Wolverine Wellness](#)- confidential; 734-763-1320; provides Wellness Coaching and much more

Canvas help

[Link to Canvas support for students](#)

Questions and feedback

Send me feedback and questions any time via email or the Canvas Inbox, or post questions in our community conversation space on the Yellowdig platform.

Classroom research

I am working on a research project that seeks to investigate how to best support student learning in an online environment. I plan to use this research to help me better teach this course and other courses I teach online.

In this class, we will have the opportunity to do a wide variety of activities, including but not limited to discussions, video and audio recordings, games, quizzes, investigations, reading analyses, exploration of resource apps and websites, brief written assignments, reading one another's writing and watching one another's videos, and reflecting on our learning. These are all activities that I would normally offer while teaching this course, regardless of my research. I plan to analyze your work in these exercises for my research project. Of course, however, you can opt out of inclusion in my analysis of any part of your work for any reason at any time. There will be no effect on your grades in this course of any decisions you make about participating or opting out. In other words, participation in this research project is entirely voluntary, and there is neither any bonus for permitting me to include your coursework in the research project nor any penalty for not participating in the research project, in part or in full.

In any presentation of this research, I will not include your name or any identifying details. If I plan to quote extensively (i.e. more than one sentence or an anonymized image of your work), I will follow up with an email in advance to check whether this is acceptable to you. Please contact me (pbogart@umich.edu) if you have any questions or concerns about this research, or to opt out in part or in full at any time.

Course Outline

Welcome to Preparing for Graduate Success: Language, Culture, & Community at U-M

Become familiar with the course & one another. Completing this welcome module unlocks weeks 1-4 below.

Week 1. The Culture(s) of Graduate Education in the United States

Explore the graduate school context in the U.S. and practice language skills for presenting yourself professionally and effectively as a new graduate student. Begin to explore the use of generative AI in graduate communication.

Week 2. In the Classroom—English for Interactive Learning and Teamwork

Jump into the collaborative mode of many graduate disciplines today, examining the impact of diverse experiences in productive collaboration and learning language to negotiate the role(s) you will take on.

Week 3. In Academia—English for Research & Scholarship

Identify ways to fully participate in the scholarship of your discipline in writing and speaking, understand how research in your field incorporates published scholarly writing, and enhance language you can use to bring your own expertise to the table. Continue to explore ethical use of AI in course assignments and graduate research activities.

Week 4. Beyond the Classroom—English in Campus Life

Connect with the hundreds of ways to build social and professional networks on campus, further explore campus discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and put the finishing touches on a professional self-introduction you can use dozens of times during your first few weeks on campus.