

# Syllabus

## Preparing for Graduate Success: Language, Culture, and Community at the University of Michigan (Summer 2026)

**Monday July 13 - Sunday August 9, 2026**

Congratulations on your admission to your graduate program at the University of Michigan. This online course prepares you to succeed in your U-M graduate studies by exploring campus culture and academic language use for graduate study and research. You will identify U-M resources that support international graduate students. You'll establish an early network of friends. Every step of the way, you will explore how to enhance your spoken and written communication to achieve your academic, scholarly, and professional goals.

In this interactive four-week course, you will respond to brief articles, watch and interact with short videos, 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 each other. You will receive individualized feedback from your instructor, Pamela Bogart.

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 a range of online resources (including generative AI tools) to improve your academic writing and speaking
- Navigate the process of attribution and citation in your academic discipline

- Participate in campus life in ways that are meaningful to you

## Your Instructor

Pamela Bogart, Lecturer IV, English Language Institute

You can send me messages within the Canvas Inbox or email ([pbogart@umich.edu](mailto: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 from strangers into new friends.

Here is a starting set of guidelines 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, 2016. 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'll be submitting informal audio/video recordings, and these should never be re-posted anywhere else. *We will never paste anyone else's words or upload someone else's voice or image into any generative AI tool.*

### 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. Part of making

learning from one another possible is offering productive feedback to classmates to the best of our abilities.

### **3. 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. Differing ideas are valuable, and disagreeing respectfully is a key part of academic life.

### **4. 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 discussion board, conversation, or group effort.

### **5. 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, both in Canvas and in Yellowdig. This approach will make discussions both more efficient and more productive.

### **6. 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 1-5 to interact thoughtfully with one another.

### **7. Crediting our sources, including AI tools**

When we refer to another person or organization's words or idea, we will be sure to credit the source. If we use generative AI tools (e.g. UMGPT, ChatGPT, Google Gemini, DeepSeek) or AI writing tools (e.g. Grammarly), we will show how in any post or assignment where we have done so.

### **What "asynchronous" and "due dates" mean**

This course is asynchronous, which means that you can participate anytime you like between deadlines. We will have no required live online course meetings (though we

will have optional ones). All required items are associated with a due date on Canvas. Work that is submitted by the listed due date will be graded. Work that is submitted late is still encouraged because this gives you practice and more interaction with peers, but it may not be graded or receive instructor feedback. In many of our video discussion assignments, for example, there is no mechanism for Canvas to notify the instructor when new work arrives. The only exception to this late-work policy is if you receive a written extension or extended-time accommodation for any given assignment from your instructor. Extensions should be requested in writing, with a reason for the request. Appropriate reasons include, for example, accommodation of a disability, religious holidays, power outages, extreme weather events, illness, or moving to Ann Arbor during the course.

## Technical requirements to take this course online

The course is set up in Canvas, available to U-M students at [umich.instructure.com](https://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 a VPN, depending on where you're taking the course. This U-M Information Technology page includes "[Consider International Access to U-M Resources](#)," and this can help you figure out how to get connected. There is a U-M VPN, for example. You are also welcome to reach out to [ITS Help](#)
- (Information and Technology Services) if you need assistance at any time.

## Generative AI use policy

Generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, UMGPT, DeepSeek, Gemini, NotebookLM, Claude, Grok, Grammarly, or Microsoft products) are all around us, and you will likely use many of them in your graduate studies at U-M. So this course is a good space to identify how you want to engage productively and ethically with these tools. PGS is also a space to enhance your ability to critically consider generative AI writing suggestions. At

the University of Michigan, every instructor sets rules for their course, so you are likely to encounter a combination of permissive and restrictive rules this fall.

So now our two generative AI rules in this course:

1. If you do not use generative AI, that's always fine. Just say so, and briefly tell us why. This way, there will be no gray area about whether rule 2 was applied or skipped.
2. If you use AI (even Grammarly or Word's AI) in preparing your written or spoken contributions to our course, you must share
  - **what AI tool(s)** you used
  - your **initial prompt or first draft** (which I realize maybe multilingual), plus any follow-up prompts or drafts (you can copy and paste or give us a link)
  - **how you evaluated** which **suggestions** to accept and which to reject
  - a **screen shot or screen capture video** with evidence of your use of the AI tool(s).

As long as you share this evidence, you are welcome to use generative AI tools. This class is designed to give you a live, human learning community in which to explore your use of language in graduate school, so feel free to experiment and share.

At present, we are all participating in a moment of massive change in how we define individual creativity and individual expression, so this expectation to always be explaining what tools you used and how you used them may feel a bit excessive, and will likely change some more in the coming years. Right now, in this course, this degree of documentation of your process is required.

I will do the same when I post to our discussions in Canvas and Yellowdig. In creating and revising this syllabus, I chose to not use generative AI, because I wanted to preserve my writing "voice" and pay close attention myself to every detail here. I did, however, review the syllabus with a tool called "Panorama" in Canvas, in order to check and repair any accessibility issues, such as being format-friendly for an audio screen reader.

## 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 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. 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 course does not earn credit, and does not appear on your transcript.*

Course activities include:

- Discussion forums and video-embedded discussions
- Individual reflections on language use and academic cultures
- Language activities, including interactive video
- 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 identify the keys to your own 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 Inbox messaging. I am eager to adapt this course with you to optimize your learning experience.

While some courses require documentation of a disability 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. 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.

## **Religious/Cultural Holidays**

I encourage you to celebrate religious or cultural holidays that are important to you. Please inform me in advance, via email or Canvas Inbox messaging, as to how a given holiday will affect your participation schedule, so that we can make advance alternate plans together.

## **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.) These start about the 4th week of classes each term.

## **Student Wellbeing**

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.

## 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.

#### 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.

#### Week 4. Beyond the Classroom—English in Campus Life

Connect with the hundreds of ways to build social and professional networks on campus, explore how you want to build and impact your community on campus, and put the finishing touches on a professional self-introduction you can use dozens of times during your first few weeks on campus.