Guide to Writing Course Descriptions

A. Basic philosophy:
- Write in sentence fragments for brevity
- Eliminate anything that is obvious
- Eliminate redundancies
- State clearly and precisely what the course IS about
- Keep descriptions succinct and easy to understand

B. A selection of discouraged words and phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word or Phrase</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A study of&quot;, &quot;Study of&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses involve study, review, and/or analysis of particular topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;An analysis of&quot;, &quot;Analysis of&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses involve study, review, and/or analysis of particular topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;An introduction to&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses will introduce students to new topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Continues to&quot;, &quot;continuation&quot;</td>
<td>Implied by Course Number, description, place in course listings</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Examines&quot; &quot;examines how&quot;</td>
<td>Implied</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Focuses on&quot;, &quot;this course focuses on&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses focus on particular areas; &quot;focus&quot; or &quot;emphasis&quot; should only be used to highlight a special area of importance within a larger overarching course description</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Introduction to&quot;, &quot;Introduces&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses will introduce students to new topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Involves the study of&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses Involve study, review, and/or analysis of particular topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Issues include&quot;, &quot;The following issues will be explored&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: the list of topics will be-understood as included issues or areas for study</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Literature course&quot;</td>
<td>Redundant: it is clear from the title that it is obviously so</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Reviews&quot;, &quot;A review of&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: all courses Involve study, review, and/or analysis of particular topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Special focus/emphasis&quot;</td>
<td>Redundant: &quot;Focus&quot; or &quot;emphasis&quot; is enough;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Students will learn&quot;</td>
<td>Implied: students are assumed to learn about topics specific to a particular course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This course&quot;, &quot;This course is&quot;, &quot;In this course&quot;</td>
<td>Redundant: course descriptions naturally describe courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To cope with&quot;, &quot;deal with&quot;</td>
<td>Superfluous: &quot;address&quot; is a better usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Very unique&quot;</td>
<td>Redundant: you cannot intensify &quot;unique&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Examples

1. Eliminate superfluous words

e.g., “KLNG 275 (3) Readings in Klingon Narrative
   Introduces students to a variety of narrative forms ...”
   • It is implied that students will be taking the course.
   • "A variety of" is not necessary, as "forms" implies more than one narrative type.
   • Recommended revision: delete the superfluous phrase and use entire course description to focus on specific elements of the course.

2. Use economical language; eliminate ambiguous language

e.g., “Develops students' communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing”
   • "Skills" is preferable to "communicative competence in".
   • Recommended revision: "Develops listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills".

2. Use economical language; eliminate ambiguous language

e.g., “Consult course listings for current year's offerings”
   • Statement should specify where such listings can be found.
   • Recommended revision: "Consult department for current year's offerings".

3. Use economical language; eliminate redundant language

e.g., “KLNG 321 (3) Business Klingon I
   An advanced Klingon language course: Practical business-focused reading, writing, and presentation will be organised to build up students' comprehensive abilities, for deal with business interactions and documents.”
   • Problems with tense, prepositions, awkward verbiage.
   • Unnecessarily complicated sentence structure.
   • More redundancy and stating of the obvious.
• Recommended revision: "Practical business-focused reading, writing, and presentation skills addressing business interactions and documents."

  e.g., “KLNG 401 (3) Media Klingon
  Focuses on further developing students' abilities to read and understand the Klingon language used in the context of media primarily through newspapers as well as radio/TV broadcasts and Internet news."

• Problems with prepositions, verbiage.
• Serial comma is required.
• Recommended revision: "Reading and understanding Klingon as used in newspapers, radio/TV, and Internet news."

3. Use transparent and sensible subject groupings and descriptions

  e.g., “KLNG 115 (6) Intensive Basic Klingon II
  Continues to develop students' communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing in spoken Klingon and modern written Klingon, with special emphasis on reading and writing."

• Sort communication skills by medium (i.e., one listens to and speaks a spoken language; one reads and writes a written one).
• A continuing course will "continue" to develop whatever skill is on offer; there is no need to say so.
• Listening, speaking, etc., are communication skills.
• Serial comma is required.
• Recommended revision: "Skills in listening to and speaking Klingon, reading and writing modern written Klingon; emphasis on reading and writing".