

“Writing, and lots of it,  
is as basic to the armed forces as  
webbing or ammunition.”

William A. McIntosh  
*Guide to Effective Military Writing*

## ERH 313 Writing for Junior Military Officers

Seminar in applying the principles of rhetoric to the analysis and production of written communications used by junior officers. Cadets will use classical and contemporary rhetorical theory to explore the functions, purposes, and audiences of military writing genres from all branches. The cultivation of lifelong capacities for using rhetorical structures to think analytically, argue effectively, and communicate clearly will be emphasized.

*Prereq: ERH 102, minimum grade of C.*

### Military officers must be able to

lead soldiers through earning respect  
make and justify decisions  
train, evaluate, and counsel soldiers  
advise superiors

As a VMI English major, you'll learn  
the skills that set successful officers  
apart from the rest:

analyzing and responding  
to human nature  
researching to find accurate  
and precise information  
making strong cases for  
decisions and recommendations  
adapting your communication  
to specific audiences  
speaking and writing with  
correctness, clarity, and effect

# So you want to be an officer?

Preparing for a  
military career  
with the VMI English major



# VMI English majors reflect on how their degree enhances their military careers.

“The English major at VMI taught me to **write and think forcefully and concisely**, without a margin for misunderstanding. If you’re trained to be an effective communicator, those skills will be sought every day of your military career.”



**COL Thomas Moncure '72**

A command pilot with over 3150 flying hours, COL Moncure graduated from pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi in 1973. He has served as the Deputy Director of Plans and Programs at Ramstein Air Base in Germany and in various positions at VMI: Commander of Air Force ROTC and Professor of Aerospace Studies from 1998 to 2002 and as Post Inspector General from 2007 to 2010.

**1LT Fredrick D. Walker '15**

Public Affairs Officer, Outreach Officer for 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, CA



“The greatest skill I took away from the English major is being able to **form ideas and express them in a logical way that people can understand**. Other invaluable takeaways are the ability to do rigorous research, either to **develop a position and justify it with a compelling argument** or to find accurate answers to questions, and the ability to communicate those answers clearly and effectively.”

“**Communication is the most important human skill**. The higher-order skill is listening to understand what the other person wants to communicate, followed by knowing what you want to communicate.”



**COL James Inman '86**

VMI Chief of Staff COL Inman has Master’s degrees in Liberal Arts from LSU and in National Security Strategy from the National Defense University. His most recent assignment was Commander of the National Capitol Region Warrior Transition Brigade. Other assignments include Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Cadet Command; Field Artillery Branch Chief, Human Resources Command; and Commander 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 101st Airborne Division.

“My duties cover maintaining and monitoring equipment readiness for the entire battalion. I use the **research, writing, and speaking skills**

I learned as an English major, especially in courses for my Rhetoric and Writing Concentration, when preparing PowerPoint presentations and briefings to superiors (the majority of my job). I’m also responsible for instructing fellow lieutenants and higher-ranking officers in basic grammar for writing.”



**2LT Alec Roach '18**

Maintenance Control Officer for 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Engineer Battalion, Camp Hovey, South Korea



**2LT Emma Quirk '18**

Public Affairs Officer  
Scott Air Force Base, IL

“The **reading, analysis, precise writing, and effective communication skills** that I picked up in all of my courses in the English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies department prove useful every day when I am given a task, usually on an unfamiliar topic and with a quick deadline. My rhetoric classes have come in handy when I have to **deliver truthful messages to various audiences**, whether writing a post for social media followers, helping prepare an investigation report delivered to families of deceased crash victims, or conducting a response analysis for a four-star general.”