University of Southern California, Fall 2016

**CORE 111: Writing Seminar I (Sections 63548/63556)**

with Professor James’ CORE 102

Instructor: Dr. Michael Petitti

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Course Location: AHF 410g

Course Times: M 12-1:50pm/2-3:50pm

Office Hours: By appointment

*“I am speaking of a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflicts with the powers that be.”* – Karl Marx, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing” (1844)

**Course Objectives**

In CORE 111, we will work to become better writers by becoming better readers. To do so, we will consider our classroom a laboratory and each of us a scientist or inventor. Reading and writing, like laboratory experiments, are ongoing processes of discovery and improvement. Collaboratively, we can learn sound methods of investigation and experimentation in order to advance our understanding of both individual literary texts and ways of reading. We’ll also experiment with our writing, trying out different ways of articulating, supporting, arranging, and styling our ideas in order to interest and excite potential readers.

By embracing the idea of our classroom as a laboratory, we also must engage the realization that so long as we’re putting in honest effort, there’s no such thing as failure in a lab setting. Meaning, the “mistakes” and “failures” we encounter reading and writing about texts will bring us closer to valuable insights. If we’re asking worthwhile questions and taking intellectual risks then we’re always producing new knowledge—even if it’s not the knowledge we expected—and this class will reward such efforts.

Inevitably, our journey will involve both unlearning old methods and experimenting with new strategies. If this all sounds like a lot of work, it is. However, rest assured that the effort you commit to improving your reading and writing now will pay off enormously in your academic, professional, and civic lives. The ability to understand difficult texts and to express your ideas in clear, precise prose will help you in every conceivable field, whether you end up reading and writing business plans, social strategies, grant proposals, legal briefs, research reports, newspaper articles, press releases, or screenplays. Just as importantly, the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills you develop here will help you become informed and responsible citizens.

**Required Texts & Materials**

* Trimble, John R. *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011. ISBN 0205028802
* A college composition notebook
* Your CORE 102 Texts
* Your CORE 111 syllabus
* Multiple copies of your own work (prewriting, outlines, rough drafts, final drafts) for review both in class and in tutorials. Please plan for this in your printing or photocopying budget.

Please bring your notebook and all relevant CORE 102 and CORE 111 texts to all classes and tutorials. I may occasionally ask you to bring a laptop to class or tutorial as well. If you do not have a laptop or tablet that can access the internet and open Word and PDF documents, please let me know so we can make alternate arrangements for you.

**Course Policies Attendance & Participation**

CORE 111 only meets once a week, and the participation of every student is vital for its—and your—success. If you find that you must miss a class, tutorial, or other deadline, please e-mail me in advance. You are allowed one absence for any reason. (You do not need to tell me the reason or obtain a doctor’s note, etc.) After two or three absences, students often find their performance in the course noticeably suffers because they’ve missed so much valuable class time. If you find yourself facing a major illness, family emergency, or other situation that threatens to affect your ability to attend and participate in our class, please get in touch with me as soon as possible so we can talk about your options. Be aware that after any absence it’s your responsibility to talk with classmates about what you missed so that you’ll be prepared for the next class.

Speaking of preparation: to thrive in CORE 111, you need come to each class ready to actively participate. This means arriving on time with all the relevant course materials in hand (that is, any reading or writing assigned for that meeting). It means having done the assigned reading—and having *thought thoroughly about* the assigned reading—in advance, so that you’re prepared to ask questions, express opinions, and respond to the comments of your classmates with respect and intelligence. There is no sitting on the sidelines in this class; everyone needs to be an active member of our community. Speak up for your ideas, and try out new ones. Take outrageous positions. Fall on your face. Respectfully challenge and critique each other. Have fun. *Please, keep all laptops, cell phones, and other distracting devices turned off and out of sight.*

**Assignments:** We will work together on six writing assignments (and many smaller writing exercises) over the next fifteen weeks. Each finished assignment you turn in for my feedback will be the culmination of an extensive *writing process* for which you will produce multiple artifacts, including invention exercises, outlines, rough drafts, revisions. Often, I will ask you to submit these artifacts along with your final assignments. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments should be double-spaced, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins. Pages should be numbered in the upper right corner (with the exception of the first page).

**Late Work:** It is your responsibility to finish each writing assignment by its due date and time. I am willing to consider giving extensions, but they must be asked for in advance and will not be awarded retroactively. If you turn in a paper late without having cleared it with me first, it will be marked down substantially and receive no written comments. If you find yourself falling behind please *talk to me* so we can discuss your options. I want each of you to succeed, but I can’t help you if you don't keep me in the loop when problems arise.

**Feedback:** The feedback I provide on your finished writing assignments is *purposefully not exhaustive*. Instead, I will focus on the most important areas in which you could improve. Please use my comments to help you revise the essay or write your next essay more effectively. If you want to talk more specifically or extensively about an assignment or my comments, make that part of your tutorial plan.

**Tutorials:** Over the course of the semester, you will attend **six 30-minute tutorials** with me in order to discuss your writing in a one-on-one setting. Many students feel that these meetings are the most beneficial part of the CORE 111 experience. To reap the benefits of a tutorial, however, you’ve got to engage in extensive preparation. *You’ll be guiding our conversation*, so make sure to decide in advance what you need help with or want to discuss. Try to formulate specific questions about recent in-class activities, previous assignments, or the current assignment, so that you’ll walk out of our meeting a more confident writer than you were when you walked in.

Please note that tutorials are designed primarily to improve your writing process—they are not intended to be editing sessions in which I will “fix” your paper. I’ll always provide specific instructions about the writing you should bring with you to our meetings. Always be on time and bring two (2) copies of your written work, as well as all appropriate texts. Missed tutorials will not be rescheduled unless you have arranged an alternative meeting with me in advance.

**Workshopping:** You will learn a lot from each other over the course of the semester, in part because you will be reading your classmates’ work. Sometimes we may use examples of your writing for an activity in class; other times you may peer review some of your classmates’ drafts or give each other feedback on homework. This means your classmates may read any writing you produce, so always put forth your best effort and never submit anything that you wouldn’t feel comfortable having others read. In the event that you feel compelled to write something you don’t want to share, come and talk to me.

**Technology:** Generally we will not be using laptops, tablets, or other electronic reading/writing devices in class. You can (and should) take all necessary notes on paper, unless you have a documented physical or learning difference that requires the use of a computer. For some class activities I may ask you to use your laptops; in those cases you should make sure to keep to the task at hand when your laptop is out and refrain from checking email, social media, or other websites. Please keep phones silent and away *at all times* during class. Your engagement necessitates that you refrain from texting and/or looking at your phone during class.

**Plagiarism**: Taking the words of another author and passing them off as your own undermines both your learning process and the academic community of which you are now a member. So does turning in a paper for one class that you wrote for a different class. If you are caught plagiarizing you will receive a failing grade for this course and will be asked to leave the Thematic Option Honors Program; you may also be dismissed from USC. Generally, to avoid plagiarism you must do the following: give credit to the proper sources for any ideas you reference that are not your own; avoid turning in papers written for another class; and be careful when you work with tutors, friends, or family members because if the person helping you alters your work substantially this is plagiarism as well. For a complete definition of what constitutes plagiarism, see your SCampus Student Guidebook. If you have further questions, don’t hesitate to ask me.

**Grading**: Your grade will be weighted in the following manner:

Formal Written Assignments (A1-A6) 60%

In-Class Preparation & Participation 20%

Tutorial Preparation & Participation 20%

Your grade in CORE 111 is based largely on improvement. I am more interested in your steady effort, growth, and achievement throughout the semester than in the letter grade of any individual assignment. Developing your reading and writing skills takes diligence, patience, and dedication. You will be rewarded for taking risks on your papers as well as progress in meeting your individual writing goals. You will also be rewarded for consistent and thoughtful participation in class and tutorial discussions. Coming to class or tutorials with missing or incomplete work, or coming without having read and reflected on the required texts, will significantly lower your preparation and participation grade (which will significantly impact your final grade). I will gladly discuss your progress with you throughout the semester, but I will not forecast your final grade.

*\*\*\*Please Remember: CORE 111 and CORE 102 are* ***separate courses****. Though they share texts, they each have separate goals and grades.\*\*\**

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university.  You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity*/*Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/). This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* [http://ali.usc.edu](http://ali.usc.edu/), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu>will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

***Some final thoughts:***This class is a safe space for open, engaging thought and discussion. The more you participate, the more you’ll get from this course. I welcome different, even controversial, points of view, so long as they’re presented in a respectful, thoughtful manner. I invite you to challenge yourselves and see what lively, thoughtful discussion—and writing—you will achieve as a result.

**COURSE SCHEDULE[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Class Date** | **In-Class Topics** | **Texts** | **Assignments Due** | **Tutorial** |
| **1** | **August 22** | Course goals; close reading; intro A1 |  |  |  |
| **2** | **August 29** | Hallmarks of experienced writers; intro A2 | Trimble 1; Trimble 9 (copy) | **Assignment 1 due** Monday (8/29) by 10am | **X** |
| **3** | **September 5** | NO CLASS—LABOR DAY |  |  | **X** |
| **4** | **September 12** | Close reading review; the writing process | Trimble 2 | **Assignment 2 due** Sunday (9/11) by 5pm |  |
| **5** | **September 19** | Thesis statements; intro A3 |  |  |  |
| **6** | **September 26** | Argumentative Significance; promises of the thesis; macro-organization | Graff 7 (copy) |  | **X** |
| **7** | **October 3** | Topic sentences; function outlines | Graff 10 (copy) | **Assignment 3 due** Sunday (10/2) by 5pm |  |
| **8** | **October 10** | ADVISEMENT WEEK—Class NOT Canceled | Trimble 8 |  |  |
| **9** | **October 17** | Titles & Introductions; intro A4 | Trimble 3 |  | **X** |
| **10** | **October 24** | Counter-argument; quotation strategies | Graff 6 (copy) | **Assignment 4 due** Sunday (10/23) by 5pm |  |
| **11** | **October 31** | Revision; micro-organization; intro A5 | Trimble 11 & 12; Graff 8 (copy) |  | **X** |
| **12** | **November 7** | Style; diction & syntax; conclusions | Trimble 5-7 | **Assignment 5 due** Sunday (11/6) by 5pm |  |
| **13** | **November 14** | Implications of Style | Orwell essay |  | **X** |
| **14** | **November 21** | Intro A6 |  |  |  |
| **15** | **November 28** | Course wrap up |  | **Assignment 6 due** Friday (12/2) by noon |  |

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

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| **Week 1 8/22- 8/26** | Intro A1 |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 2 8/29- 9/2** | A1 Due  Intro A2 | A1 response tutorials | A1 response tutorials | A1 response tutorials |  |
| **Week 3 9/5- 9/9** | **LABOR DAY** | First CORE 102 Paper Due  A2 Tutorials | A2 Tutorials | A2 Tutorials |  |
| **Week 4 9/12- 9/16** | A2 Due (Sunday)  Intro A3 |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 5 9/19- 9/23** | Hand back A2 |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 6 9/26- 9/30** |  | Second CORE 102 Paper Due  A3 Tutorials | A3 Tutorials | A3 Tutorials |  |
| **Week 7 10/3- 10/7** | A3 Due (Sunday)  Intro A4 |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 8 10/10- 10/14** | Hand back A3  **NO CORE 111** |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 9 10/17- 10/21** |  | Third CORE 102 Paper Due  A4 Tutorials | A4 Tutorials | A4 Tutorials |  |
| **Week 10 10/24- 10/28** | A4 Due (Sunday)  Intro A5 |  |  | Hand back A4 |  |
| **Week 11 10/31- 11/4** |  | A5 Tutorials | A5 Tutorials | A5 Tutorials |  |
| **Week 12 11/7- 11/11** | A5 Due (Sunday)  Intro A6 |  |  |  |  |
| **Week 13 11/14- 11/18** | Hand back A2 | Fourth CORE 102 Paper Due  A6 Tutorials | A6 Tutorials | A6 Tutorials  Hand back A5 |  |
| **Week 14 11/21- 11/25** |  |  | **THANKSGIVING** | **THANKSGIVING** | **TSGIV** |
| **Week 15 11/28- 12/2** |  |  |  |  | A6 Due |
| **Week 16 12/5- 12/9** |  | Fifth CORE 102 Paper Due | CORE 112 Orientation and Holiday Dinner | Hand back A6; Submit Final Grades | Take Home CORE 102 Final Paper Due (12/12) |

**January 9 – SPRING 2017: FIRST DAY OF CLASSES**

1. Elements of our schedule are likely to change. I’ll announce any revisions in class. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)