**The Raw Basics**

**Writing 150** – **Writing and Critical Reasoning**

**Globalization: Current Issues and Cross-Cultural Perspectives**

Fall 2016 – Section # 64860

T-Th 2-3:20pm – VKC 252

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**The Grand Note on Writing**

Writing 150—or an introductory composition course at any institution—is designed to acquaint students with the academic discourse community and transition the high-school mind to the elevated expectations of college-level thought. In essence, now that you’re at USC we’d love for you to join the conversation, but you’ll need a more refined set of skills in order to do so.

Writing is the basic unit of university conversation, and joining in will require deep consideration of what writing actually means. Is it merely an inscriptive act—the act of typing sentences into a Microsoft Word document? Unfortunately, in the high school experience of many USC underclassmen, academic writing has been a mechanism for “recording stuff you know about some other thing.” Writing is how we prove to our English teachers that we’ve read *Huckleberry Finn* or *Othello*; writing is how we demonstrate we’ve understood the Federalist Papers in our AP U.S. History classes; writing is how we exhibit our basic competency with grammar and five-paragraph structure to the overlords who score our SAT and ACT exams.

This course will seek to redefine writing, in particular the nature of the academic essay. I’d like to propose that essays are not some bogus format invented by teachers as a homework vessel, or a simple container for relaying information about something else we have studied. This is boring. This is reductive. This sells writing WAYYYY short.

In this course, in the university, and in life beyond the university, the essay might be redefined as:

The most compelling way to work through—and ultimately package—our original understanding of something vital and complex.

Notice that the packaging—the actual construction of the sentences and paragraphs; the typing in the Word document—comes second here. The first part, the working through, is the most significant task of our Writing 150 course. The writing process involves figuring out not just how to *voice* an opinion, but more fundamentally how to *arrive* at an opinion that is thoughtful, justified by the analysis of credible evidence, and aware of its own limitations (while still remaining convincing to its audience, of course). This is the domain of Critical Reasoning: the thought-tools that allow us to analyze with sophistication, generate compelling ideas, and push those ideas to even greater nuance and complexity.

In doing so, we’ll also redefine our culture’s everyday definition of Argument: our papers will not “win” arguments by crushing the opposition or by screaming louder or with more conviction. To begin with, the issues we’ll be writing about this semester will rarely if ever break down into a simple binary of two opposing camps, an us vs. them. We’ll encounter an audience of well-informed skeptics with a host of worldviews and philosophies, and they’re not likely to be persuaded by volume, venom, or superficial aggression. Rather, we’ll have to master sound reasoning practices, and methods for handling the legitimate counterarguments our readers will surely make.

But rest assured we’ll also spend time on packaging our thinking, because the actual writing of the papers is how we’ll deliver our rich ideas to our readership. This semester we’ll consider, in great detail, how the choices we make as writers impact our readers’ experience, and how to craft papers that best navigate our readers through our arguments.

By focusing on these proficiencies, Writing 150 nurtures the sophisticated analytical and communicative talents necessary for adult life (and, implicitly, democratic citizenship) in a highly connected, complex society.

**The Grand Note on Globalization**

Since this course is primarily tasked with acquiring *skills*—the ability to think and write well—our globalization theme will not imbue the course with a traditional *content* load, a body of knowledge directly transmitted from professor (or massive-reading-load-selected-by-professor) to student. Does this mean that we’ll learn no content, no actual “stuff” about globalization? Not at all, but in the spirit of our redefinition of writing as an epistemic process—a way of coming to know something—it is through **your own** writing that you’ll discover the facts about, and more importantly, your positions on the unsettled issues within globalization.

In truth, this will be a journey of co-discovery, because in a writing class focused on rhetoric, I’m not interested in teaching you a static body of facts about globalization in some simple, directive way. We’ll focus on issues and questions to which I genuinely don’t know the answers, either!

Rhetoric—for our purposes, the pursuit of the best and most persuasive ideas that address genuinely unsettled issues—is interested in the realm of uncertainty, and almost everything related to globalization is uncertain, if we really think about it. Even its definition is elusive. What is globalization? Is it just free trade, or did trade kickstart a phenomenon that is now far more complicated? Enmeshed in so many other human endeavors? Does it make life better for Americans? For citizens of other nations? Who controls it? Does anybody? If it’s neither a force for good or ill but just different, can we articulate how it’s different? In what ways is it changing the human experience of living, loving, working, learning, dying?

There is no Professor of Globalization on campus to deliver us these answers, and no Department of Globalization for her to toil in. The increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of the modern world intersects almost every discipline: economics, finance, political science, international relations, and history may come first to mind, but globalization also invokes art, sociology, anthropology, law, literature, philosophy, military science, ecology, et cetera.

Globalization is multifaceted, complex, and evolving as we speak: our job this semester is to **use writing as a tool for making sense of it.**

**The Tools of the Trade**

Writing 150 Course Book (available at bookstore—bring every day)

One two-pocket folder for use when turning in paper assignments and additional materials

Printed versions of assigned articles and your own work for class discussion, so consider your printing/copy responsibilities as a replacement for an onerous book budget.

All of the wonderful free content available in the digital age that will help inform you about your world, because you cannot write sophisticated analyses of your cultural, social, and political moment if you do not know what that moment is. (Read *The New York Times/The Wall Street Journal/The New Republic/The Economist/The Atlantic/The New Yorker*, browse your favorite political blog, watch *The Daily Show*, et cetera. Being a regular consumer of contemporary discourse will allow you to participate in contemporary discourse!)

**The Work That Must Be Done**

Three major essays (which we’ll call Writing Projects) written in response to different assignment prompts, to be developed over the course of several weeks.

A set of less formal writing assignments (e.g. responses to readings or class discussions, prewriting exercises, Blackboard blog posts) assigned within any major paper’s multiweek cycle. This is the ancillary work that makes up 15% of your grade. Most will be small, but the larger ancillary assignments will be weighted more heavily.

Regular attendance in class and individual conferences throughout the semester and *active participation* in class discussions and workshop activities.

A final, fourth major Writing Project that consists of:

One new paper in which *you* choose the issue to write about (primary in determining your grade)

A set of supporting documents (secondary in determining your grade)

The final Writing Project will be due on our last class meeting of the semester, and cannot be turned in late.

**How It Shall Be Graded**

45% The First Three Writing Projects

#1: 10%

#2: 15%

#3: 20%

35% Final Writing Project (#4)

15% Ancillary Work

5% **ACTIVE** Classroom Participation (predicated on attendance; you have to be in class to participate)

**How It Shall Appear**

All out-of-class essays should be typed and double-spaced. Required length will be specified with each assignment. Please use a 12-point *Times* font and one-inch margins. Do not insert extra spaces between paragraphs. **Turn in assignments with all prewriting materials and rough drafts in the two-pocket folder (as earlier specified in The Tools of the Trade section).** Writing 150’s workshop format focuses on evolving texts, from brainstorm to draft to final product, and as such, I will **NOT ACCEPT** a paper if all I see of it is the final draft. You need to keep all notes, prewriting material, additional sources, and drafts for submission in your final assignment folder.

Papers are required in paper form and it is the paper form that will be graded. However, you may be asked to **upload** a copy of the papers to Blackboard, as well, so that I have a digital archive and can run suspect texts through Turnitin.

Please keep a copy of all final drafts. Back up your data frequently; an easy way to safeguard completed work is to email the document file to yourself (therefore storing it on your mail server) or use Dropbox.

The top, left hand corner of each assignment should contain the following items (**single space** this administrative information so that your paper doesn’t start halfway down the page):

Your Name

Course & Section Number

Semester and Year (Fall 2016)

Writing Project Number

**The Long, Boring List of Very Important Policies**

**Laptops:** Laptops/Tablets will not be allowed under normal circumstances.

\*This class is not usually notes-intensive, and everything can be written by hand. Please see me with Disability Paperwork if applicable.

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. This is a workshop class and you must be present to take part in classroom discussions, conferences, peer reviews, and in-class writings. If you are observing a religious holiday, or if you are participating in official University activities, it is your responsibility to notify me beforehand (except in unforeseen circumstances) and arrange to make up the work that you have missed.

* Two tardies (over five minutes late) count as one absence.
* More than two absences will cause your grade to drop 1% for each extra absence.
* More than nine absences will likely cause you to fail the course

**Participation:** Participation is more than just raising your hand. It is the attitude you bring to the class, and whether you act as a benefit or detriment to the class atmosphere. Tardiness and absence, sleeping or zoning out, and secretly texting underneath the desk/table are all things that will lower a participation grade, no matter how brilliant and engaging your comments are. And obviously, poor attendance also has ramifications on participation.

**Conferences:** For each assignment, I will cancel class in order to meet with you individually or in small groups in my office. We will schedule these meetings in advance; I will attempt to offer a range of times so that you can fit our meeting into your schedule. Most conferences are intended for one-on-one discussions of your essays, but they are not proofreading sessions. Our goal will be to discuss your ideas and arguments in preparation for drafting. *Absences in conference count as class absences.*

**Late papers:** Late papers will drop 1/3 grade (such as B- to C+ or C+ to C) for every class session that goes by. **Note:** If your printer jams, please come to class on time even without your paper. We’ll discuss a penalty-free mechanism to get it to me, most likely bringing it to the Writing Program office ASAP after class. It will be date-stamped by an office worker and placed in my mailbox. *No emailed papers will be graded.*

**Extension:** You have the option to request an extension for **one** paper during the semester (not eligible on WP4, our final paper). It will be granted with no questions asked. Please send me an e-mail by 5:00 p.m. the day before the paper is due (do not expect a reply from me). All extensions have an expiration date, so please make sure that we have established one. Generally, it will be around a week after the original due date.

**Communication with your instructor**: You have my e-mail address and my telephone number, so if a problem arises for you, feel free to contact me. Also, be realistic about time (e.g., do not e-mail me at noon that you’re going to miss a 1:00 p.m. conference, and expect evening or weekend emails to be answered on the morning of the next business day).

**E-mail:** You *must* check your e-mail on a daily basis, since I will often make class announcements (e.g., changes, cancellations) via e-mail. Again, papers will notbe accepted over email.

**Cell phones:** A ringing OR vibrating (trust me, we can still hear it) cell phone is disrespectful to the class and the instructor. If it occurs frequently, it will be grounds for lowering your participation grade. Don’t text, either. This is probably even more obnoxious, and adult human beings who cannot go 75 minutes without phone-fiddling and exterior stimulation need to do some soul-searching.

**Additional Support:** The Writing Center (THH, 3rd Floor/ phone: 740-3691) offers writing workshops, as well as half hour, one-on-one appointments with Writing Consultants. This is a free service available to all USC students, so you should consider taking advantage of it. Scheduled appointments are recommended. <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/> See also: pgs. 134-135 toward end of coursebook.

The Writing Program has a web site that offers some good techniques for approaching the papers required for this class: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writing-program-links/>

**THE WRITING PROGRAM IS GEARED TOWARD TEACHING *PROCESS* BUT GRADING *PRODUCT*.** You will be graded on the quality of the product you turn in, *not on how far you have progressed or how hard you have worked*. This is another reality of life beyond the university. Make sure that every assignment you turn in meets the stated requirements.

**Students With Disabilities:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Writing Within An Academic Community:** Students must at all times adopt a tone that is respectful of others’ racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, religious and political beliefs, sexual orientations, and gender. The University will not tolerate verbal or written abuse. Also, the University takes a very strict outlook on matters of academic integrity, especially in cases involving plagiarism, multiple submission, and illegitimate assistance. On a personal note, in order to protect the sincere efforts of ethical students, I consider it my duty to verify suspected incidents of plagiarism.

**The Summative, Encouraging Note**

During this semester your job is to become a better critical thinker, a more thorough dissector of how the world works and where it may need to change, and a more effective crafter and communicator of written arguments that can illuminate these necessary truths. I am **EXCITED** to teach you these skills, because I wouldn’t do this if I didn’t think it was supremely important.

If all of my students improve, and we beat the Irish and Bruins (bonus points for ‘Bama, but man, that’ll be tough), I will consider it a most excellent fall semester.