

WRITING 150
WRITING AND CRITICAL REASONING: THEMATIC APPROACHES
IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY
Fall 2019 – Course Description

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Section 64550: MWF (12:00-12:50pm) GFS 201

INTRODUCTION

Many students arrive at college with minimal appreciation for how powerful writing can be – not only in academic contexts but in professional and personal ones too. Throughout high school, students often approach writing assignments as simply one of several tasks they must fulfill. They read the prompt, put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), and “get it done,” **often in one sitting**. But such essays have little enduring meaning because they are simply **exercises**, rather than sincere attempts to grapple with difficult, complex issues or to express exciting and compelling ideas.

As you enter the university context you will find that writing assignments play a larger role in your studies. They are meant to provide you with an opportunity to explore new ways of thinking and **to learn through your writing**. Writing projects allow you to contribute **in a more lasting way** to a community of peers, of both students and scholars. To do so, you must learn to **write with purpose** and to convey your ideas in ways that will make people **want** to consider them more carefully. Participation in this academic discourse community requires that you demonstrate a willingness to engage, **respectfully**, with the ideas of others around you, and to tackle rather than evade the complexity of contemporary issues. To infuse greater meaning into your writing, you must deepen your understanding of events and phenomena, through **reading** and **reflection**, until you arrive at an argument that is **worthy of words**.

Much of Writing 150 will involve exploring **writing as a process** – breaking it down into stages to better identify not only what makes an effective paper, but, perhaps more importantly, also what makes a **creative approach** to a topic or issue. We will focus on **critical analysis** as a component of argumentation, and by using diverse methods of **invention** we will work to innovate in our thinking. We will also consider more carefully the effective **arrangement** of ideas to achieve our goals of persuasion, and will rely more heavily on **revision** to allow ideas to evolve productively. We will also explore the ways in which we can use the surface features of a text to reinforce its purpose, by honing **style** and adopting useful **conventions** of academic writing. All of this will require a more careful understanding of the importance of **context**, both for analyzing an issue and proposing solutions, but also for successfully negotiating the relationship with the **reader** and the broader discourse community.

Writing 150 – IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY

The thematic focus for our writing class will be centered on the very rich topic of identity and diversity. On an individual level we find that our identity is informed primarily by the sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, and class dimensions of our lives. Yet we will interrogate the tendency to over-rely on stereotypes and distinct patterns of identity to make sense of the world, when individuals and populations are consistently exposing the limitations of such thinking. While many of us celebrate the remarkable heterogeneity of contemporary American society, and presume a shared investment in democratic ideals that protect our differences, scholars have pointed out the chronic underrepresentation and continued disempowerment of populations within this broader context. To address these issues, and to identify the ways in which institutions may hamper the realization of our collective goals we will explore ideological barriers and embedded patterns of discrimination in American society.

REQUIRED BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Writing 150 Course Book, 2019-20 (available online)
Assigned readings, posted on **Blackboard (Bb)**

EVALUATION

All formal written assignments will be evaluated in terms of the "Writing Program General Evaluation Rubric" provided in the *Writing 150 Course Book*.

The final semester mark will be determined by six components:

- 5% Class Participation**
- 15% Ancillary Work** – diverse smaller writing assignments given throughout the semester that intersect either with (A) the particular assignment or (B) the broader thematic
- 5% Writing Project 1** (1500-word essay)
- 20% Writing Project 2** (1800-2000-word essay)
- 25% Writing Project 3** (2000-2200-word essay)
- 30% Writing Project 4 and Final Portfolio** (2100-2300-word essay and **portfolio assignments**)

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The majority of this class will be conducted as a *writing workshop*, one that concentrates on the active development and practice of critical reasoning and writing skills. You will have many opportunities to contribute to class dynamics, either through in-class discussions, group work, or written responses that are seen by the group. These contributions will determine your participation grade. The class will be a more productive experience for everyone if you are all able to contribute your ideas and perspectives.

Attendance does not equal participation. But if you do not attend class, you will not have an opportunity to earn points for participation. Regular attendance and participation will easily result in full credit for the portion of the grade. **If you miss more than three class periods (even for sickness), I will begin to deduct points from your participation grade. If you miss more than six class periods, I will begin to deduct points from your final grade.** The Writing Program policy is that **if you miss three or more weeks of class—for any reason—you will be required to either drop the class or take a final grade of "F."**

As this course is predicated upon my interaction with you and with the texts upon which you are working, please keep in mind that ***I will not accept papers with which I have had no involvement in the writing process.***

If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what work you missed **from one of your classmates**. If you have to miss class for a genuine **emergency**, I would appreciate it if you would notify me in advance or as soon as possible, so that I may brief you on what you have missed and begin planning ways to help you catch up.

ANCILLARY ASSIGNMENTS

You will be assigned multiple smaller tasks throughout the semester to facilitate the pedagogical goals of the course. These include the **diagnostic essay, prewriting for your Writing Projects, analysis of related phenomena, reviews of relevant events, and reflections** of various types. As part of our ancillary work, for the first 5+ minutes of many of our classes, you will complete an ***in-class writing assignment*** in an online journal on Blackboard (**In-Class Journal**). These assignments will serve to trigger deeper conceptual engagement with relevant topics in the course, or to explore potential intersections with outside topics. In addition, you will be expected to upload your homework assignments – both process writing and assignments pertaining to the thematic – to the Homework Journal (**HWJ**). ***Only you and I will have access to these journals.*** As part of your ancillary grade you will also be required to contribute regularly to the class **Blogs** (on Bb). We will use these blogs to share responses to assigned readings and other materials, to circulate feedback on student presentations, and to post discussions about style. All of these small individual assignments will be graded and will determine your final grade for Ancillary Work.

LATE PAPERS and EXTENSIONS

Writing assignments are due when called for **in class** on the specified submission date. On the day an assignment is due, please come to class even if you don't have the assignment completed. We will often be starting the next assignment on that date.

Late papers will be penalized one step (e.g., B to B-) for each day they are late. **You may choose to hand in one paper** (from Writing Projects 1-3) **one week late**, without penalty, **only if you complete a rough draft according to the class schedule**. I would recommend saving this privilege for midterm crunch time, but the choice is yours. All papers, including late papers, must be submitted in electronic form via Blackboard (I will provide you will specific instructions on how to name your file and upload it to Turn-It-In on Bb). **WP4 cannot be submitted late**. In addition, if you have not completed one or more assignments, you will not be able to submit a final portfolio.

CONFERENCES

On four occasions throughout the semester we will meet in conferences in lieu of our regular class period. Some of these conferences will be scheduled as individual meetings with me, while others may be organized as small group sessions. *For individual conferences, please bring a copy of the assigned material (i.e., thesis, rough plan, rough draft – electronic or print) to be discussed and prepared notes and questions regarding your essay.* During conference weeks my regular office hours will be canceled.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Diagnostic Essay – In-class on Wednesday, August 28th
Writing Project 1 – due September 16th
Writing Project 2 – due October 9th
Writing Project 3 – due November 4th
Writing Project 4 – due December 6th

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

September 2nd – Labor Day
October 13th – Last day to withdraw without a “W”
October 17-18th – FALL RECESS
November 27-29TH – THANKSGIVING RECESS
November 15th – Last day to Withdraw with a “W”
December 6th – Last Day of WRIT 150

OFFICE HOURS

My office is JEF 230. My office hours are from 1-2pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. In addition, I am happy to schedule appointments at other times if those hours are difficult for you. Should you have any questions about the class, and particularly if you encounter any special difficulties with an assignment, please speak with me about them as quickly as possible, whether before or after class or during office hours. I am also available by email.

TECHNOLOGICAL DISTRACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

All cell phones must be turned off and put away (i.e. off your desk, in your bag) for the duration of the class and during conferences. Text messaging and use of social media are also absolutely unacceptable. At the beginning of the semester, I encourage students to bring laptops/tablets to class. **When we are not using the laptops/tablets together, they must be closed.** If laptops serve more as a distraction than as a tool for learning, I will ask you to leave your laptops at home (which would not be ideal). Do not assume that if I don't call you out on your inappropriate use of electronics during class that I haven't noticed. Rather, I may be making a mental note of your inattentiveness and lack of engagement in class activities, which could adversely affect your participation grade and my willingness to write a recommendation for you in the future.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center (<http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>) is located on the **second floor in Taper Hall** on campus. The center is open to all students of the university and offers free consultations for any type of writing assignment. The Writing Center is a terrific resource. You are encouraged to visit the center throughout the semester for any additional guidance on the assignments for this course (or for any other course). To make an appointment, create an account through their online system: <https://usc.mywconline.com/>. Be sure to bring the relevant assignment sheet, paper, or prepared questions to your session.

A NOTE ON 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/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>.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

- Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

- Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

- Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

- For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

- Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

- Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

- Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

- Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

- Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

- Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

- Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>