

Writing 150: Human Values & Belief Systems
Fall 2021
Section 64420R
MWF 10:00-10:50, CPA 104

Professor: Alexandria Hall

Email: akhall@usc.edu

In-Person Office Hours: Wed 11:00-12:15 or by appointment

Office: Meet inside UUC (The Church)

Zoom Office Hours: Mondays, by appointment

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to help you develop and refine the writing and critical thinking skills that will help you succeed in your college career and beyond. We will approach writing as a tool for thinking deeply about new and familiar concepts, creating knowledge, and engaging with academic discourse communities. Our work will focus on all stages of the writing process, from invention and drafting to revision and developing your own style. Over the course of the semester, you will practice and hone your writing skills by completing four essays, along with related ancillary work. These essays will require you to analyze a given topic or text and to produce a sound and original argument.

Our thematic, human values and belief systems, will focus our critical attention on our own personal beliefs and values, but also the way cultural values are inscribed into everyday objects and promoted by images and narratives in the media we consume. What do our society's common practices, products, and adages say about its values? Where do these values come from? How are they perpetuated? How can we critique them? These are some of the questions we will return to throughout the semester as we think critically and deliberately about our own values within their broader social and cultural contexts.

Required Texts

Writing 150 Course Book (available for [purchase online](#))

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard

Course Work

Writing Projects

Throughout the course you will complete four essays, also known as writing projects (WPs). The deadlines for these are:

WP1: September 10

WP2: TBD

WP3: TBD

WP4 & Final Portfolio: December 3

In preparation for each writing project you will also complete the following:

Ancillary Work

This includes smaller assignments that are focused on helping you develop various parts of your essays.

Conferences

Before each writing project is due, I will hold conference periods, during which we will meet one-on-one to discuss any questions, ideas, or issues you may be having. Regular class will be cancelled on conference days. ***A missed conference is equivalent to an absence from class.***

Course Policies

Grading

We will use a grading contract in this course, which supports a labor-based model of assessment. This means that if you do the required work for this course and meet all the conditions of the grading contract, you will receive a final grade of at least a “B.” You can find the grading contract and a grading breakdown at the end of this syllabus.

Attendance and Participation

The learning we will do in this class requires active engagement and participation in class discussions, group activities, peer workshops, and individual writing tasks. You are allowed one week (i.e. three classes) of absences penalty-free. Any additional unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade. For more information about how attendance and participation will affect your grade, see the grading contract below.

Submitting Work

Each ancillary assignment must be brought to class on the day that it is due. I will not collect these assignments until the end of each unit, but I will check to make sure you have brought them to class. Each WP and its related ancillary assignments will be collected via Blackboard on the day that it is due. Work must be submitted by 11:59 pm on the due date.

Formatting

All papers should be submitted double-spaced with one-inch margins. Use Times New Roman 12-point font and include a Works Cited page with MLA citations. Include page numbers in the upper right corner along with your last name.

Late Work

To find out how late work will affect your grade, please refer to the grading contract below.

Extensions

Most of the work for this class is done in stages, which should help with time management and timely completion of assignments. Once we finish a unit, we quickly transition to focusing on the

next unit. Because of these two factors, deadlines in this class are quite firm. However, I understand that there may be cases in which an extension is warranted. If you believe you will need an extension on an assignment, please write to me as soon as possible.

Technology in the Classroom

Computers and tablets may be used in class for approved activities such as note-taking. Any use of technology that is distracting to you or your peers is prohibited. No cell phones in class. If there is a special circumstance that requires you to have your phone on hand, you must leave the room to use it.

Communication and Email

I typically respond to emails within 24 hours. Due to time constraints, I am not able to review entire drafts of papers via email. I can respond to specific questions, look over rough plans, or respond to paragraph-length passages.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this class must be your own original work, and the ideas you present must be your own or properly attributed to their source. In this class we will be engaging with and responding to other people's thoughts and writing, but it is very important to properly cite their ideas when using them in your own work. This includes direct quotes, indirect paraphrase, and other uses of work and ideas that are not your own. It also applies to your own work that you have written previously or for other classes (self-plagiarism). If you get caught plagiarizing, you will be reported to SJACS. In summary, plagiarism is a very serious offense with serious consequences. Please ensure that all your work is your own, written specifically for this class, and that all other ideas, images, and language you've included are properly cited. For more information on plagiarism and academic integrity, please see your course book (pp. 149-150). Need help with citations? Refer to your course book, check out the *Purdue OWL MLA Guide*, or ask me.

Resources & Support Networks

- The Writing Center
Provides free individual consultations to assist students with their writing. Make an appointment for help with any stage of the writing process.
<http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter>
- 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, workshop, 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 Student Accessibility Services and Accommodations (OSAS)
Responsible for ensuring equal access for students with disabilities in compliance with state and federal law.
<https://osas.usc.edu>
- Student Support Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student (eg. 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) and (323) 442-1000 (HSC)
For 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC

community.

<http://emergency.usc.edu>

- COVID-19 Resource Center

Information, updates, and support for the USC community related to COVID-19.

<https://coronavirus.usc.edu>

Please be advised: This syllabus is subject to change.

Writing 150 Grading Contract

This class uses what's known in the field of Rhetoric & Composition as a "grading contract." Under the terms of this contract, students are guaranteed a semester grade of "B" provided that they meet the following terms:

1. *Attendance*: You can miss one week's worth of class without incurring a penalty (two weeks if all of the absences are excused). "Excused absences" refers to absences that are related to university-sanctioned events (such as athletic contests or religious holidays), or for reasonable cases where you simply cannot attend class—this might include illness (mental or physical), "acts of God," accidents, or other unavoidable mishaps. I'll only excuse absences if you communicate with me—i.e., you need to let me know that you need to miss class, preferably 24 hours in advance, or as soon as you are able. Any and all work you miss while absent needs to be submitted by the beginning of the next class meeting you attend.

2. *Tardiness*: Arriving to class later than 5 minutes after our scheduled starting time counts as a tardy; three tardies counts as one absence.

3. *Essays*: You must complete all four of the major essay assignments for class, and they must be handed in on time. Due dates are specified down to the minute (so, yes, if your essay is just one minute late, it will still be counted as "late" and will constitute a breach of the contract). Bear in mind that you still must hand in all the essays to pass the course. If one or more essays are missing on the last day of class, additional penalties will be applied: see the chart below for details (numbers in parentheses indicate missing essays in the "Late Essays" column).

3. *Ancillary work*: You must complete all of the smaller writing assignments and tasks, including practice heuristics, reading responses, stylistic exercises, and so on. This work needs to be handed in on time, too.

5. *Professionalism*: All your work needs to show signs that you are putting in serious and focused effort. This means that you need to be an active participant in class and a good reading partner for your student colleagues (especially during peer review activities), and that your written work should be carefully copyedited, should meet the length requirements, and so on.

Final Grades: Semester grades will be determined based on assessment of the Final Portfolio and the extent to which you've fulfilled the terms of the grading contract.

- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, and you earn a B, B+, A-, or A on your Portfolio, then that will be your semester grade.
- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, and you earn a B- or lower, you will still get a B as your semester grade.
- If you've **violated the terms of the contract**, then your final grade will be *lowered by one step or more depending on how many violations you've accrued*. See the table below for details.

Contract Violations:

This table shows how your semester grade will be affected if you don't meet the terms of the contract:

Grade Step Deductions	Total Absences	Late Essays	Late Ancillary Work	Lapses in Professionalism
B or above, per the Portfolio	3 or less (6 if excused)	None	2 or less	2 or less
1 step lower	4		3	3
2 steps lower	5	1	4	4
3 steps lower	6		5	5
4 steps Lower	7	2	6	6
5 steps lower	8		7	7
6 steps lower	8	3 (1)	8	8
Automatic F	9	4 (2)	9	9

About Grade Steps: a Grade Step is one full grade below the assigned Final Portfolio grade. In other words: if you've violated the contract, your final grade will be whatever your final portfolio grade is, **minus the contract deductions**. So, if your final portfolio is an A, but you have 4 unexcused absences, your semester grade will be lowered to an A- (1 Step, from A to A-). If you earn a B+ on the final portfolio, but you have 2 late essays, your final grade will be lowered 4 steps, down to a C (B, B-, C+, and C = 4 Steps Lower than a B+).

Note that penalties are cumulative. So, if you have 5 lapses in professionalism, **plus** a late essay, your final grade will be by **5 Steps**. Or, if you have 4 absences (grade drops 1 Step), plus 4 late ancillary assignments (grade lowered 2 Steps), your final grade will be lowered by **3 Steps total**. Numbers in parentheses in the "Late Essays" column refer to any essays that still haven't been submitted on the last day of class.

"Get Out of Jail Free": Each student may have one (and only one) "Get Out of Jail Free" card to use in the event that the terms of the contract are violated. You may use it at any time during the semester, but only once, and it may only be applied to the first infraction (meaning that, e.g., you cannot use it to erase 7 absences, or 5 late ancillary assignments). Generally speaking, it's best to save this in case you fail to turn one of your essays in on time.

Extensions on Deadlines: I will negotiate new deadlines with individual students as needed, on a case-by-case basis, if there is a good reason to do so. This shouldn't happen very often. Any new due dates that you arrange with me must be spelled out **in writing** or they will not count, and you will be held to the original terms of our grading contract.