

## Writing 150: Writing and Critical Reasoning, Thematic Approaches

### Identity and Diversity in American Contexts

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 Office: JEF and Online  
 Hours: See assignment sheets

Fall 2021  
 Sections 64540 T/Th 11:00 SoS B43  
 64630 T/Th 12:30 CPA 254  
 64850 T/Th 2:00 CPA 254  
 64940 T/Th 3:30 CPA 254

#### First—a note about circumstances:

We've all been through a strange and often confusing 18 months! And there is no guarantee that everything will go smoothly from here on out. The key word for this semester should probably be "flexibility." Be prepared if necessary for the class to go online at some point during the semester. Take precautions yourself to stay healthy. If you suspect you may have been exposed to COVID-19, make arrangements to isolate and follow the class through the course notes (provided on Blackboard). Conference days and Office Hours will generally be conducted online through Zoom.

#### Course Description:

Writing 150 is the initial course in the composition sequence, and is intended to provide students with a rich and challenging intellectual experience during their first year at the university. The course develops sound practices of writing and reasoning, encouraging students to apply academic concepts while exploring relevant issues

The Identify and Diversity thematic, like all the 150 courses, promotes the development of the thinking and writing skills necessary for success in general education and major courses while inviting students to join the on-going academic and cultural conversation regarding salient issues. Toward this end, the course fosters the development of active, self-directed learners who

comprehend the acquisition of information and ideas not simply as material for examinations but as “equipment for living” in both the academic context and beyond.

Be aware that, as the title of the course indicates, this is a class in writing AND critical reasoning. As part of the practice of critical reasoning, students will be expected to complete all readings and film viewings and be prepared to discuss in class. The midterm will primarily test engagement with the readings and discussion.

### **Objectives:**

Writing 150 can be understood in terms of its five pedagogical and rhetorical principles:

1. Critical reasoning, analysis, and argumentation
2. Invention
3. Arrangement
4. Style
5. Revision



The instructional approach stresses dialogue between and among students and instructor. We use the writing workshop as the principal mode of instruction and include individual writing conference to practice and develop writing and reasoning skills.

### **Required Texts and Resources:**

- ✓ USC Writing Program Course Book—Online—purchase access key/code from bookstore via link (in Blackboard)
- ✓ Topic readings will be posted on Blackboard for each assignment
- ✓ Visual materials and films may also be linked on Blackboard

### **Communication:**

Email policy—feel free to e-mail if you have a question or concern. Be aware that, while sometimes I may be able to respond fairly quickly, I cannot respond instantaneously on a regular basis. Generally, expect between a 12-24 hour turnaround time for responses.

It's a good idea to start a new e-mail with a clear subject line (e.g., “Links for readings aren't working” or “Question about documenting sources”) rather than replying to one of my emails—especially a group email.

I don't generally respond to emails about absences or attendance unless a specific question needs addressing.



An assignment sheet will be available for each of the 4 Writing Projects. The assignment sheet will explain the background for the topic; list readings, journal entries, and other requirements; provide the topic question to be addressed in the essay; and note the due dates for each component of the assignment.

I will put together a semester-long schedule and post it on Blackboard around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> week of class. Review it periodically throughout the semester; it will be updated as necessary.

### **Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities—let me know if you require specific accommodations for this class. Students requiring such accommodations will register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Call (213) 740-0776 for more information.

### **Grading and Course Requirements:**

This course is evaluated on a contract basis. All students who fully complete the requirements will earn at least a “B” for the class (see attachment on the Contract for more details on what fully meeting the requirements entails). Students who receive a higher average on the final two writing assignments can earn a B+, A-, or A in the class.

#### **Requirements:**

- ❖ Writing Project 1—4 ½ -5 ½ pages
- ❖ Writing Project 2—5-7 pages
- ❖ Writing Project 3—6-8 pages; researched
- ❖ Writing Project 4—6-8 pages; researched
- ❖ Reflective Portfolio:
  - Revision (Choose from WP 1 or WP 2)
  - Impromptu Essay
  - 1 page reflective cover letter
- ❖ Online Writing Response, Research, and Reflection Journal





## **Explanations and Definitions**

### **Assignment Submission:**

Drafts must be in shareable form for peer review days (email Word documents or share Google docs) and submitted in the draft portals on Blackboard at the completion of Peer Review

Submit final essays on the appropriate Blackboard Turnitin portal by the given due date/time

Additional submission portals for other work—in-class writing, exercises—will be available in Blackboard under “In-class Work”

The Online Writing Response, Research, and Reflection Journal will be composed online throughout the semester, with brief prompts for responses given with each Writing Project. Final review of the journal will take place at the end of the semester. Blogger.com seems to be the easiest platform for composing and for viewing, but you may use Wordpress or another platform if you choose. Whichever platform you use, you will need to make commenting available and easy to access, since students will be expected to comment on other blogs from class. We’ll make sure everyone has a blog set up by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of classes, and addresses will be posted in Blackboard in groups for classmates to review and comment.

### **Rough Drafts:**

Since this class emphasizes the process of writing, it is important that you participate in class activities and assignments that will help you produce the finished product. We will generally have 2 draft workshops for each paper. Students who fail to have a workable rough draft for class workshops on the assigned days will receive an NP for attendance for that day. In addition, please note that essays cannot be accepted for credit if no drafts have been submitted for review in peer edit or conference sessions.

### **Attendance and Participation:**

You are expected to attend classes and conferences when possible. This is a workshop class; sessions cannot be fully summarized afterwards. That being said, as noted—students this semester may be required to miss due to COVID exposure. If you will need to quarantine, let me (and your other instructors) know so that we can work out suitable arrangements. If the class moves to Zoom, attendance and participation on Zoom will be expected.

Students will be expected to contribute to group workshops and submit in-class assignments to satisfactorily complete the participation requirement. Students must also complete posts on their blogs and comment on posts in other students' blogs on a regular basis as part of the participation assessment.

### **Conferences:**

We will schedule several conference times during the semester. A link to the sign-up sheet for the conferences will be made available on Blackboard a few days beforehand. Class and office hour times will be cancelled to make enough conference slots available for everyone. A CONFERENCE COUNTS AS A CLASS MEETING, and missed conferences will be treated as absences. Essays will not be accepted for grading and will receive a "0" if both the conference and the drafting workshop for that assignment are missed and I have not seen a draft version of the paper.



## PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC OFFENSES:

Plagiarism: do not try to pass off others' work as your own. All papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com. If your paper is copied in whole or in part from another source, or from a paper submitted to another class, you will receive a "0" on the paper and may be referred to the dean.

## Other Policies:

- Non-class materials--do not read or work on non-class materials (homework or reading for other classes, Sudoku puzzles, etc.) at any time during class. Since students cannot participate in this class while working on outside activities, these activities will result in a marking of "NP" for that day. If you don't find the class stimulating enough to engage your full attention, change the situation by adding your voice to the discussion
- Emailed drafts--We will work on drafts during conferences and office hours; per department policy, I cannot respond to full drafts via e-mail. You may email me a small portion (a thesis statement, a paragraph), and request feedback on a specific issue.
- Video/audio recordings--please be aware that recording classroom activity or sharing a Zoom recording without the permission of all involved is not permitted. This could be considered a serious privacy violation for other students and may be referred for disciplinary action



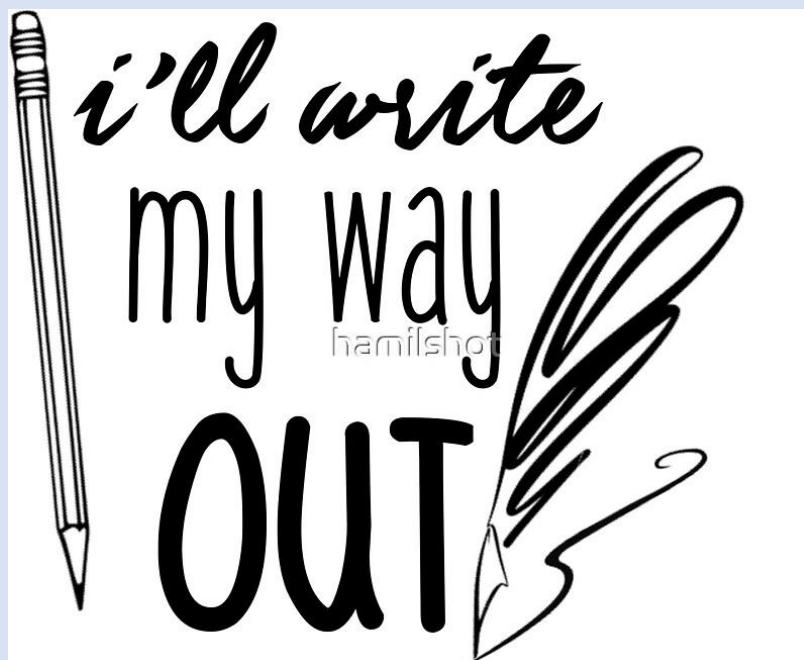
## The Writing Center

213 740-3691

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>

The Writing Center offers ½ hour individual tutoring sessions available to all USC students. You will need to register online with your USC userid and a password to begin setting up appointments. Experienced consultants will work with you on any stage of the writing process, from interpreting a prompt, to creating a rough plan, to polishing your final draft. The Writing Center consultants will not proofread or edit your paper for you, but they will help you to develop skills to revise your own work. You may sign up in advance or walk in for a thirty-minute one-on-one consultation.

In order to maximize your meeting with a Writing Center consultant, come prepared with a copy of your assignment, all drafts and prewriting, and specific questions.



## Writing 150 Grading Contract



This class uses a **grading contract**. Under the terms of this contract, students are guaranteed a semester grade of **B** or B- (with a passing grade on the final 2 projects) 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. Be sure to

communicate with me if you will need to take an excused absence.. All work you miss while absent needs to be submitted at 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; arriving after activities have been explained and started (groups have been set up and started work, for example) counts as a double-tardy. Three tardies counts as one absence.

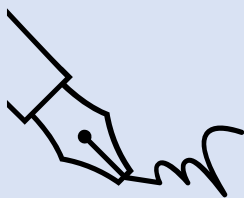
3. **Essays:** You must complete all four of the major essay assignments for class, and they must be handed in on time. Bear in mind that you must hand in all the essays to pass the course. If one or more essays are missing on the last day of class, additional penalties will be applied: see the chart below for details (numbers in parentheses indicate missing essays in the "Late Essays" column).

4. **Ancillary work:** You must complete **all of** the smaller writing assignments and tasks, including the online journals, in-class work on practice heuristics, reading responses, stylistic exercises, and so on. This work needs to be submitted on the day assigned.

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 Writing Project 3 and 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 average on WP3 and WP4, then that will be your semester grade.
- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, and you earn a B-, C+, or C, you will still get a B as your semester grade.
- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, and you earn a C-, you will get a B- as your semester grade.
- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, and you earn a D or D+ you will get a C+ 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 (0 steps lower)	2 or less (4 if excused)	None	2 or less	2 or less
1 step lower	3		3	3
2 steps lower		1	4	4
3 steps lower	4		5	5
4 steps lower		2	6	6
5 steps lower	5		7	7
6 steps lower		3 (1)	8	8
Automatic F	6	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 3 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.

**"Do Over":** Each student may have one (and only one) "Do Over" 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.