

Writing 150: Writing and Critical Reasoning, Issues in Aesthetics

Syllabus – Fall 2022

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Office Hours: TTH 2:30 – 3:30 and MWF by appointment

Personal Meeting Room Zoom ID: 570 438 3084 or <https://usc.zoom.us/my/pamelaalbanese>

Office: (JEF 249)

Class Meetings:

Section 64350 TTH 9:30 – 10:50 GFS 111

Section 64530 TTH 11:00 – 12:20 GFS 213

Section 64655 TTH 12:30 – 1:50 GFS 229

Writing 150 – Issues in Aesthetics

Writing 150 – *Issues in Aesthetics* intends to strengthen your writing and critical thinking skills by presenting writing as a process that you can break down into stages, from prewriting, to drafting, to revision. Through the lens of aesthetics, you will compose formal and informal (ancillary) writing projects that develop the rhetorical and critical reasoning skills necessary to engage deeply and thoughtfully within our academic discourse community.

Engaging in a thematic as all-encompassing and abstract as aesthetics compels us to consider a wide range of complex and interrelated ideas, disciplines, and phenomena. Topics related to art, politics, media, fashion, culture, identity, technology, and ethics—to name a few—are intrinsic to analyzing values, practices, and concepts related to the thematic. Yet, how do we examine such critical concepts without resorting to preconceived notions and predetermined narratives? Furthermore, how do we analyze aesthetics, a philosophical construct we participate in constantly—both viscerally and intellectually, intentionally and reflexively—in a manner that generates insightful, original writing?

By encouraging a shift in perspective and a break from convention, Writing 150 guides the development of methods that will enhance your ability to generate ideas that go beyond a surface analysis of the issues. We will practice prewriting techniques to develop thought-provoking, original ideas, while asking strategic questions and considering multiple angles to deepen our analysis of concepts related to aesthetics.

During the drafting process, we will focus on methods for effectively arranging and organizing ideas into a coherent structure, while delving into the fundamentals of integrating credible sources and sound reasoning to support claims. Finally, we will practice the art of revision, perhaps one of the most important stages of the writing process. Revision is integral to strengthening our writing, as structural and stylistic flaws often are not apparent until the writer has taken a break and can return to the work with fresh eyes.

Writing 150's emphasis on writing as process, to breaking down writing into a series of stages, will teach you to identify your strengths and weaknesses and to adjust accordingly. Central to this process is the idea that writing is recursive; writers must continually return to their drafts to reformulate, to reorganize, and to revise. Approaching writing as a process reinforces the idea that writing is ultimately an act of learning, thinking, and discovery—a process that will benefit you throughout college and beyond.

Course Content

Although I will encourage you to write about topics that you are passionate about and that have personal resonance for you, many of our readings and discussions will center around contemporary issues connected to aesthetics. These may intersect with current events and topics related to visual media, identity, and politics, to name a few possibilities. I will be receptive to your interests and input as I fine-tune our course content throughout the beginning of the semester.

Required Texts:

Writing 150 Course Book, 2022-2023 ([click here](#) to purchase a digital access code)

Assigned readings (posted on Blackboard/Content/Readings)

Course Work/Assignments

Formal Writing Projects:

Writing 150 is comprised of four (4-8 page) writing projects spaced apart throughout the semester. You will receive a detailed assignment sheet and schedule at the beginning of each writing project cycle. The last month of the semester will focus on a final portfolio consisting of a formal essay and two supplementary assignments.

Approximate Writing Project Deadlines (dates subject to change):

9/9: Writing Project 1

10/7: Writing Project 2

11/4: Writing Project 3

12/2: Final Portfolio (Writing Project 4 + oral presentation + reflection essay)

Ancillary Writing Assignments:

Throughout the semester, you will write a series of shorter, informal assignments, (either in-class or for homework), aimed at generating and exploring ideas and techniques associated with the learning objectives of each of the formal writing projects. Please take them seriously, as they will only enhance and strengthen the quality of your writing.

Participation/Discussion:

Writing 150 is not a lecture; it is a workshop that requires active participation from the entire class. I expect everyone to contribute to our large group discussions, to participate in smaller group activities and peer reviews, and to keep up with the reading and other assignments. A constructive, thought-provoking, and engaging class requires the active participation and presence of every student.

Conferences:

Four times throughout the semester, usually one week before each writing project is due, I will cancel one class session for individual conferences. Conferences are required and provide an opportunity to discuss your writing one-on-one. I'll email a sign-up sheet for conferences one week in advance of the meetings.

Blackboard:

Visit our course Blackboard website regularly (log in at blackboard.usc.edu), where I post readings, resources, and assignments. I will also e-mail announcements related to the course, so please check your USC account daily.

Submitting Your Work:

Writing projects will be uploaded to Turnitin via Blackboard by 11:59pm PST the date they are due and should adhere to the formatting requirements posted on the assignment sheet. Please submit ancillary assignments to Blackboard as a pdf or doc attachment to avoid losing work in case of internet outages, as well as to maintain formatting. Most ancillary and process work assignments will be due on Blackboard, although I'll occasionally ask you to share in-class work and rough drafts as a Google Doc.

Safety and Wellbeing

I'm thrilled that in-person learning will continue this semester; nevertheless, no one should compromise their physical or mental health to attend class. I can provide some flexibility for students who need to miss class for reasons that fall under excused absences. I may also conduct some meetings and activities online; for example, some office hours and one-on-one conference meetings may be held via Zoom. Please also be patient with me as I update class protocols and policies to adjust to unanticipated circumstances.

I expect all students to follow official USC protocols for mask-wearing, testing, vaccination, and reporting as they evolve. Please do not attend an in-person class if you have Covid symptoms. If you do have symptoms, please contact me over email and I will excuse the absence: **as an amendment to the grading contract (see below), I will provide opportunities to make up an absence and in-class work missed due to an illness or emergency.** For example, an accompanying written component may be required to make up an absence, in addition to completing any missed in-class work. However, students must still adhere to Writing 150's official attendance policy, as well as initiate a request to make up a missed class by emailing me as soon as possible.

Grading

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 competitions or religious holidays), or for reasonable cases where you simply cannot attend class—this might include illness (mental or physical), accidents, family emergencies, or other unavoidable mishaps. **I'll only excuse absences if you communicate with me—i.e., email me 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.

As per Writing Program policy, any student who misses or fails to make up three or more weeks of class will be required to either drop the class by the deadline to withdraw or will receive a final grade of "F." Since our class meets twice per week (TTH), missing **six** or more classes will result in a failing grade.

2. Tardiness: Arriving to class after our scheduled starting time or leaving early (more than 5 minutes) without a valid excuse counts as a tardy; three tardies counts as one absence.
3. Writing Projects/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. 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).
4. Ancillary work: You must complete all of the smaller writing assignments and tasks, including practice heuristics, reading responses, reflections, stylistic exercises, and so on. This work needs to be handed in on time, too.
5. Professionalism & Participation: 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. **Failing to show up for a conference meeting or not exchanging drafts or sharing feedback with your peer review group in a timely manner may count as lapses in professionalism.**

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.

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	1 week or less (2 weeks 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 3 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 communicated in advance of the deadline over email or you will be held to the original terms of our grading contract. The final portfolio must be submitted by Friday, Dec 2nd and cannot be turned in late** as other instructors assist in grading the final writing project.

Final Portfolio Evaluation: Instructors in the USC Writing Program apply a consistent grading rubric to formal writing projects; for information about the rubric, see "Writing Program General Evaluation Rubric" on pages 140-143 of the *Writing 150 Course Book*. Leading up to the Final Portfolio submission, we will discuss and agree to the terms of a rubric for the longer formal essay and the supplementary assignments.

Class Etiquette

Please be respectful of your fellow students and refrain from behavior that could disrupt the class. Cell phones should be muted during class and conferences. Browsing social media, texting, chatting, shopping, or working on assignments from other classes count as lapses in professionalism. If you have to miss a class, join late, or leave early because of an internet connectivity issue, an emergency, an illness, a religious holiday, a job interview, or an official USC activity (all of which are excused absences), please notify me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to make up the missed class. Please do not worry about providing doctor's notes or any other sort of evidence. An email from you will suffice.

*Please do not share or post any class material/recordings/content with anyone who is not enrolled in the course.

Our class will be a safe, supportive space to discuss, to debate, to disagree, and to learn from one another. I will not tolerate verbal or written abuse of any kind. Students must be respectful of their classmates' racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, nationalities, immigration status, religious and political beliefs, sexual and gender identities and/or expressions, abilities, and other aspects of identity. I am committed to practicing anti-racist and anti-bias pedagogy.

USC Writing Program Diversity Committee Statement on Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias

We are dedicated to anti-bias in and out of the classroom. We wholeheartedly stand against racism, dehumanization, oppression, colonization, xenophobia, and white supremacy. Silence on matters of injustice is not an option.

We acknowledge that oppression and dehumanization can occur consciously and unconsciously; it is important to have patience with each other. But we must also commit to the lifelong work of deconstructing our unconscious and conscious biases; dismantling racist institutions; and creating an academic environment that rejects white supremacy in all its forms.

Even further, academic writing has historically been a tool for oppression. It has encouraged standardization originally based in whiteness – and so we must ask, “Who set those standards? Why do we value only those standards? And as writers, how can we reform the standards?” Anti-racism/bias is, in fact, intrinsic to the goals of multimodal, multilingual, and decolonized writing and research.

As a writing class, we will actively engage in self-reflection to look inward and examine where our conscious and unconscious biases are rooted. We will encourage and support each other’s journeys. We will cultivate authentic voices; interrogate our policies and practices; and commit to continually educating ourselves to provide an educational experience that is anti-racist, humanized, and celebrates intersectional identities. With collaboration, we will create an anti-bias classroom.

Some ways we will pursue anti-racism and anti-bias in our class:

- Engage in open, honest, and at times uncomfortable discussions confronting institutionalized racism and bias; and be accountable to one another in the acknowledging, confronting, and dismantling
- Work together to become comfortable with discomfort; realizing that our culture prioritizes comfort, and especially white comfort. Anti-bias work will be uncomfortable; especially for those of us who have benefitted from whiteness ideologies
- Actively respect, at all times, people’s race and ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, nationalities, immigration status, sexual and gender identities and/or expressions, abilities, and other aspects of identity – in assignments, discussions, language, behavior
- Learn and be attentive to how intersecting identities impact classroom dynamics; and equally value through assessment, feedback, and assignments intersecting identities
- Engage in collaborative, multimodal, and intersectional work as a class – anti-bias and anti-racism is lifelong work that must be communal to take root
- Elevate the voices of historically oppressed and marginalized groups through assignments, discussion, and feedback

Office Hours and Communication

Please arrange to meet with me during my office hours if you would like to discuss anything related to your writing, your work in our course, or academic life in general. If my regular office hours conflict with your schedule, please email me to set up an appointment. I will hold office hours both in person and on Zoom. I'm also available by email to answer any questions and will respond within 24 hours during the weekday.

Campus Mental Health Resources

College can be a stressful, difficult time, even during normal circumstances. Especially as we continue to adjust to the pandemic's impact on our lives, please remember that there are people out there who can help. USC offers free, online, and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, workshops, and crisis intervention. For the most up-to-date info on available services, visit <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/> You can also call the 24/7 crisis support line, 213-740-9355 (WELL). See additional information in the USC Statement on support systems below, and please reach out to me if you would like assistance in navigating any of these resources.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free, one-on-one feedback to USC students. They can provide assistance at any stage of the writing process, from generating ideas to double-checking citations. They are staffed by graduate students in a variety of disciplines and faculty from the Writing Program. To learn more or book an appointment, visit <https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>

USC's 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" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

eetix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symlicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
ombuds.usc.edu

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or otfp@med.usc.edu
chan.usc.edu/otfp

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Resources for International Students

Office of International Services <http://ois.usc.edu>

For questions about visa requirements, employment status, and information (finances; health insurance; housing; etc.) geared specifically at international students, contact the Office of International Services (OIS) at USC. Their contact information is ois@usc.edu or (213) 740-2666

The American Language Institute <https://ali.usc.edu/>

Excerpted from the ALI website:

Since 1959, the American Language Institute (ALI) has been providing English language instruction, assessment, and resources to support the academic and professional success of non-native speakers of English pursuing degrees at USC. The ALI offers English language courses for those students who want to improve their English as well as those who are required to take classes as a result of taking the International Student English (ISE) Exam. The ALI is also responsible for testing and providing English language instruction for the university's international teaching assistants.

Conversation Groups: *The Conversation Groups Program has been an American Language Institute standard for more than 20 years. It aims at promoting English conversation between USC's international and native English-speaking populations. This **FREE** resource is an excellent way for international students to supplement their studies; it provides a venue in which they can practice their growing English skills with a native English-speaking USC student in a casual environment. Past participants have reported an improvement in their English speaking fluency, a comfort in interacting with English native speakers, and a higher level of confidence in the English language.*

One on One Conversation Partners: Our [One-on-One Partners](#) page provides a list of native English speaking USC students who are available to meet with international students for one-on-one conversation partner sessions. Conversation Partners can help international students practice oral skills (from basic conversation to professional or academic speech) while learning about American culture and life in Los Angeles.