

# **WRIT 340: Writing and Disciplinary Grand Challenges**

SPRING 2023 | Section 66839  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00-6:20  
GFS 204

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Office: OHE 106B

Office Hours: by appointment (T/Th 1:00-2:00, 6:20-7:00) in person and on Zoom

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**Important note:** This class is designed to provide students with the writing and communication skills needed to undertake a more in-depth project (thesis, commercialization plan, lab-based research, etc.) within their discipline. Sustained research on a single topic will culminate at the end of the semester in a Research Proposal, a Commercialization Opportunity Plan, or another form of extended research-based writing intended to serve as the foundation of a senior project.

## **CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION**

WRIT 340X Advanced Writing: Instruction in communicating research findings to various audiences using different forms of communication, including written, verbal, and electronic. *Prerequisite:* WRIT 130, WRIT 140 or WRIT 150. *Required.*

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND TOPICS**

Our course goal is to improve communication skills, both written and verbal, within the context of engaging with current disciplinary grand challenges. Students will research the “wicked problems” within their fields of study and communicate their significance, ethical implications, and possible solutions in a variety of forms. Emphasis will be placed on writing articles and reports, giving oral presentations, and learning to present data visually to various audiences.

WRIT 340 will provide you:

- A variety of professional and academic communication skills.
- Proficiency in writing for academic, public, and professional audiences.
- Flexibility in communicating for a variety of purposes.
- The ability to prepare effective written documentation both individually and collaboratively.
- The skills required to create and deliver effective oral presentations.
- An awareness of the ways your discipline affects broader society.
- An understanding of ethics within disciplinary practice.
- The ability to engage in rigorous critical analysis.
- The ability to give and receive critical feedback.

## **COURSE OUTCOMES**

At the end of WRIT 340 you should be able to:

1. Write for academic, public, and professional audiences.
2. Demonstrate research and documentation abilities at the upper-division level.
3. Identify and analyze pressing ethical issues within a discipline.
4. Compose a proposal for a larger project (thesis, proposal) that reflects engagement in a disciplinary grand challenge.
5. Revise and edit to advanced academic and professional standards.
6. Prepare and give professional oral presentations for a variety of audiences and purposes.
7. Utilize visual aids in both written and oral communications.
8. Articulate the impact your discipline has on everyday life.
9. Work collaboratively to research, write, and present information and ideas.
10. Write accurate, precise technical prose.

## **COURSE THEME**

### *Disciplinary Grand Challenges and Engineering Moment:*

Through the lens of disciplinary Grand Challenges (chiefly, the NAE's Grand Challenges of Engineering), we will explore the concept of *Engineering Moment*. As the theme implies, this course will explore the stresses and tensions of our time and the ways in which engineers leverage knowledge to address both technological and social challenges. Our world is changing quickly and engineers influence the direction of that change

Among perspectives we will consider: the differences between science and engineering (and question the usefulness of this and other dichotomies); the need for communicating the role of engineering to the general public; the role of collaboration in knowledge production; the value of contingency thinking; the imbrication of time, technology, and society. Ultimately, *Engineering Moment* conjoins engineers' creative application of natural forces with a deep acknowledgement of our particular place in history and our responsibility to humanity.

## **TEXT**

Handouts will be distributed throughout the course  
Independent research using the USC Libraries online databases

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

The course assignments are designed to prepare you to undertake a future, larger research project. Most likely, this project will be one of the many senior theses or capstone projects within various programs at USC.

The following assignments will also help us achieve the above-mentioned course objectives. The number of possible points for each is in parentheses. The point total for the class is 1,000.

Please note that you should “**avoid submitting identical or similar work in separate courses. Although it may be warranted and indeed suitable for students to draw on their previous studies and experience, all forms of written examination must consist of original writing. In addition, students cannot earn credits for the same work in more than one course.**”

Students need to consult their supervisors if they wish to make use of material that they have written for other courses or for other purposes.

Detailed prompts for each assignment will be provided.

## **WRITTEN**

### **Ethics Paper (125 points)**

You will write a position paper inspired by an ethical issue pertaining to a grand challenge in your discipline or related to the topic of your final paper.

### **Analytical Review Essay (75 points)**

You will write an analytical review based on close readings of class material, including student work.

### **Collaborative Work (100 points)**

In teams, you will create a demo episode for the podcast *Engineering Moment*.

### **Proposal Components (150 points)**

You will learn various rhetorical conventions in preparation for your senior project after this course. These include summaries (research abstracts and proposal executive summaries) and literature reviews in various forms, annotated bibliographies, and memos.

### **Final Project (150 points) Completed analyses**

This will be a self-designated and approved portion of what will become your senior-level project. This might be an undergraduate research proposal, a technology commercialization opportunity analysis, or any deeper examination to be undertaken in a future semester.

### **Portfolio (150 points)**

You will revise your Ethics Paper and Review Essay and resubmit them as a final portfolio, along with a memo detailing your revision process.

## **ORAL**

### **Progress Report (included in Components)**

You will present your project’s progress to your classmates and, possibly, outside guests

### **Thesis Project Proposal (150 points)**

This will be the oral presentation of key findings from your final project.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

One hundred (100) points will be dedicated to class participation (see below).

<b>Item</b>	<b>Submission</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>%</b>
Analytical Review Article	Written	75	7.5
Grand Challenges Ethics Paper	Written	125	12.5
Collaborative Work Product	Written and Oral	100	10.0
Proposal Components	Written and Oral	150	15.0
Final project	Written	150	15.0
Final presentation	Oral	150	15.0
Class participation (individual and collaborative work)	Written and Oral	100	10.0
Portfolio	Written	150	15.0
Total		1,000	100%

Specific instructions for each assignment will be given. Ample warning will be given of any changes.

*File Names:* Please use the following format to name your submission files. Last name Major Assignment Semester Section. For example: Smith ME Illumin Sm20 668XX

### **GRADING AND ATTENDANCE**

Final grades will be assigned based on your point total. The total of the above points is 1,000.

There is no grading curve; grades will be assigned by a submission's own merits. I will do my best to make my expectations for the various assignments clear and to evaluate them as fairly and objectively as I can. We will review the requirements for good writing in class throughout the semester, and you can refer to the rubric common to all 340 classes at USC. **All major assignments must be completed to pass the course.**

All assignments will be graded according to this rubric and assigned point values according to the following ranges:

- 90-100% (A)  
(Your supervisor would be very impressed and remember your work.)
- 80- 89.99% (B)  
(Your supervisor would be satisfied with the job, but not impressed.)

- 70- 79.99% (C)  
(Your supervisor would be disappointed and ask you to revise or rewrite sections before allowing the document to be distributed.)
- 60- 69.99% (D)  
(Your supervisor would be troubled by the poor quality of the work and would advise you that your position might be in jeopardy.)
- 0- 59.99% (F)  
(Your supervisor would begin looking for your replacement because the work wasn't submitted or did not meet even minimum specifications.)

Pluses and minuses equal the top and bottom 2% of each grade category (i.e., 88 to 89.99% = B+ and 80-81.99% = B-).

### ***Participation and Engagement***

I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability—and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

You are expected to be an active contributor to the class, not a passive listener. Active contribution includes volunteering answers to questions; asking questions; requesting clarification; challenging me or other students in productive ways; contributing useful and relevant comments; engaging fully in any workshop-type activities.

You will also, during the course of the semester, provide other feedback to your classmates and brainstorm with them. You also will be expected to get together with others outside of class time to share work and give/get feedback.

A note regarding email: Your email represents you as much as any other written or oral communication does. Take care to make it professional. That means applying all of the rules of good writing that we're discussing in class to your email. This includes, but is not limited to, using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation; employing a direct and concise writing style; and organizing the document to further its purpose.

### ***Lateness and Mechanics***

We will create our late paper policy as a class. If you are having problems writing a paper, please make an appointment to talk with me. **All Review Articles and Ethics Papers must be handed in at least two weeks before portfolio; if not handed in by that time, they may receive a 0 and/or be ineligible for portfolio, which will result in a failing grade for portfolio. (The portfolio system assumes I have seen previous versions of all papers and that students have**

**revised their original work.)** Any paper, in-class or take-home, not turned in will receive an "F".

Mechanics on written assignments are a given. Spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors will lower both the effectiveness of the written communication and the possibilities of the grade.

### **PLAGIARISM:**

All cases of plagiarism will be addressed with utmost seriousness. Students found to plagiarize will fail the course and be referred to the Student Conduct Board. **The USC Viterbi School of Engineering adheres to the University's policies and procedures governing academic integrity. Students are expected to be aware of and to observe the academic integrity standards described in SCampus. These standards will be enforced in this class on all assignments.**

#### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual . . . [It] is considered a grave violation of academic integrity and the sanctions against it are correspondingly severe. **(University sanctions range from a grade of F in the course to suspension from the university.)** Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as ‘academic theft.’

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code (published in the current *SCampus*), plagiarism includes:

- ‘The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;
- ‘The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;
- ‘Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.’

The Student Conduct Code applies these standards to any written work submitted by a student, whether a draft or a final version.

Because of the serious penalties for plagiarism, you should insure that any writing you submit represents your own assertions and abilities and incorporates other texts in an open and honest manner . . . In academic assignments, writing is assumed to be the original words and thoughts of the student unless [the reader is] told otherwise (i.e.: material from other sources is clearly and properly cited).

From *Trojan Integrity: Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*  
(USC Office for Student Conduct, rev. Fall 2000, pp. 2-3)

In WRIT 340, we encourage peer review, since it's almost always helpful to have "another set of eyes" take a look at your paper and offer comments and suggestions. But where should you draw the line? According to the Writing Program,

The Writing Program encourages collaboration with your instructor, with Writing Center Consultants, and with your classmates; such interactions constitute one of the most important and effective means by which writing is taught. In undertaking collaborative interactions, however, remember that you are finally responsible for guaranteeing that the resulting text represents your abilities and authority and not those of the persons assisting you, however well-meaning they may be. A simple guideline may help: Never allow someone else to construct a section of your text longer than one or two sentences that you would not be able to produce on your own, and never allow anyone to copy-edit more than the first page of your paper.

From *Writing 150 Course Book*

## 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](http://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. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://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. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](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. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://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: [sarc.usc.edu](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. [equity.usc.edu](http://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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://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. [dsp.usc.edu](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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://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. [diversity.usc.edu](http://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. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**The schedule below is tentative.** When changes are made, you will be given as much notice as possible, and when possible we will make these decisions together.

*Please note:*

I have tried to make the coursework manageable by spacing your due dates throughout the semester, by breaking your assignments into manageable chunks, and by providing you with a weekly schedule that identifies what we're doing in class, what you should be doing for homework, and what's due. You must not assume that you will always be able to do everything discretely and in sequence, though. Rather, you must anticipate that your assignments will overlap, and you must organize your work in this class as you would organize tasks in the workplace. If you treat your assignments as ongoing, overlapping projects to be managed, you will have a better experience in here.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have throughout the semester I want you to get as much out of this class as possible.



WEEK	DATE	GENERAL SUBJECT	DUE
1	1/10	Introduction to course, review syllabus Introduce Ethics paper Diagnostic essay	
	1/12	Short presentations (as assigned) Discussion of Grand Challenges	HW Due: mini presentations on assigned Grand Challenges
2	1/17	Citations; Google scholar What/so what (from information to support) Discussion of Cech Utopia/dystopia	HW Due: Cech article
	1/19	What/so what/what if: contingency thinking In-class writing Introduce FINAL PROJECT Components Discuss Memo format Personal Gantt charts for class deliverables	
3	1/24	Kortshack Center Workshop (to be confirmed)	
	1/26	Joseph Williams: editing strategies Rough draft workshop and prose-level editing (bring Ethics papers)	Ethics paper due on Blackboard 11:59PM 1/30 (Monday)
4	1/31	Introduce Podcast Assignment Initial pitch and timeline due at start of class	Initial pitch DUE
	2/2	Pitches continued, if necessary Team formation and planning	
5	2/7	Podcast workshop	
	2/9	Former student Q&A panel	
6	2/14	Podcast workshop	
	2/16	Summary exercise Introduce Analytical Review paper	Podcasts DUE 2/15 (Monday); submit to turn-it-in and post on Discussion Board
7	2/21	Discussion of Goldman article	HW due: Goldman article
	2/23	Proposal Memo Workshop: Team Critiques	
8	2/28	Conferences for Individual Research Topic Moving toward Annotations: identifying context and connections in your research (discussion of	Proposal Memo and Preliminary Bibliography DUE

		prelim bibliography)	during conference
	3/2	Individual Conferences	
9	3/7	Visual Workshop	
	3/9	NO CLASS	
BREAK	3/14, 3/16	SPRING BREAK	
10	3/21	Final Report: structure and formatting Collaborative workshop	
	3/23	Conferences/TBD	Analysis paper due (Monday) 3/27 11:59PM
11	3/28	Assertion Evidence Slide format Review of Presentation Grading Rubric	
	3/30	Research review workshop	Annotated Bibliography Part 1 Due (Monday) 4/3 11:59PM
12	4/4	Portfolio Revision workshop	
	4/6	Conferences	
13	4/11	Portfolio Revision workshop	
	4/13	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	Annotated Bibliography Part 2 Due (Monday) 4/10 11:59PM
14	4/18	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	
	4/20	TBD (presentations or portfolio workshop)	
15	4/25	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	
	4/27	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	PORTFOLIO DUE 4/28 ( <b>Friday</b> ) 11:59 PM
FINAL	5/4	5:00 class 4:30- 6:30 final exam period	FINAL PAPER due by 6:30PM