

Writing 340: Advanced Writing In The Social Sciences

Instructor: James Clements

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 2pm-4:20pm Office Hours: By appointment Class Zoom Link: On BlackBoard	Office Hours Zoom Link: https://usc.zoom.us/my/jimclements Email jamescle@usc.edu
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Course Objectives: While universities can often feel like closed systems, their proper purpose is to prepare you for the life and career you will undertake once you have received your diploma and stepped away from campus. Even if, like yours truly, you love academia too much to leave it, you will at some point be required (or inspired) to produce something other than a traditional academic essay; this may content be for a professional audience (keynote speeches, reviews, conference papers) or for the wider public (social media posts, newspaper articles , viral videos, TEDTalks). You might also just write for personal reasons, in blogs, on social media, and so forth – maybe you’ll even write a novel. This class seeks to supplement your expertise with traditional academic writing with new skills that will help you engage in these other worlds.

Required Materials

Text Book: There is no textbook required for this class, but there will be a variety of readings that you will receive via Blackboard in the weeks to come.

Computer: You’ll need a computer with an internet connection, a microphone, and a webcam. If you do not have regular access to any of the above, please contact me directly and we’ll find a way to accommodate you.

Class Format: To limit Zoom fatigue, we’ll usually hold only one live Zoom session per week. Other classes will take a variety of forms: some will be peer review sessions, for example, and others will involve you completing a writing task on your own time. These “asynchronous classes” will take as long to complete as a regular class session, so please plan your time accordingly.

Learning Online

Zoom: We’ll be holding our synchronous classes on Zoom. The policies for using Zoom are as follows:

- **Cameras:** I really, really want you to have your laptop or computer camera on, but if you have a good reason to have it off, let me know before class (I don’t need a reason, just a

polite heads-up). If your camera is *not* on, you will be expected to participate by contributing to conversations during class, even if called on randomly.

- **Muting/Talking:** You should mute your microphone if you're not speaking. When you want to jump in, just raise your electronic hand and I'll get to you right away.
- **Chat:** You can ask public questions or make comments using the written chat feature at any time.

IMPORTANT: Google Sharing Permissions: We will be doing a lot of collaborative work on Google Docs. It is essential that every time you share a Google Doc, you set permissions to "Anyone can view/edit" NOT "Anyone at USC can view/edit." To do this, click "Share" in the top-right corner, and change the settings. You may need to select the "More" option to see the correct option.

Course Requirements:

Assignment	Assignment Requirements
Cultural Analysis Paper	1500-1800 word paper.
Review Paper	700-800 word paper.
Conference Paper	10 minute minimum presentation, plus Q&A.
Alternative Genre Paper	Varies by genre (see assignment sheet).
Final Portfolio	Revised versions of two previously submitted essays.
Coursework	Completion of other assignment tasks by assigned deadline.

The Grading Contract: This class is graded using a contract, which means that every student in the class is guaranteed at least a "B" grade providing that they attend each class, submit work on time, and have no major lapses in professionalism. The purpose of this "grading contract" is to encourage you to play, to take risks, to write for yourself rather than for a grade, to work with less stress and anxiety, and to move towards defining your own standards of what makes "good"

writing. You can earn a grade higher than a “B” depending on the quality of your final paper. For more on this, see the “Grading Contract” pages at the back of this syllabus.

Expectations: Chances are that any topic you choose has at least crossed the mind of your reader. But it’s equally likely that your reader hasn’t devoted *weeks of their life* to the topic you have chosen, reading, reflecting, writing, revising, and so on. It’s this commitment and dedication on the part of a writer that provides the enterprise with its value. When someone picks up a book or an essay, they get to absorb, in the short time it takes to read it, the fruits of weeks, months, or years of intellectual labor. To succeed as a writer (and in this class), one should be prepared to devote a significant amount of time to each writing project, on an ongoing basis.

Essays: You will submit four major projects over the course of the semester. A brief description of each is given below; a more detailed description for each will be provided in class during the semester:

Cultural Analysis Paper: The ability to recognize complexity and depth in seemingly innocuous things is one of the most important intellectual aptitudes. For this assignment, you’ll write a thoughtful, philosophical paper using a cultural artifact as a “jumping off point,” with an educated general audience as your intended readers.

Review Paper: We often write to *recommend* (or caution against) something, whether it be a scholarly work or idea, or something like a film or album. A good review, though, offers more than your opinion; it requires insight into what specifically *makes* something good or bad (or successful or unsuccessful).

Professional Conference Paper: We will hold a mock professional conference in class. As a member of a panel, you will present a short paper intended for an academic audience, which will be followed by questions from the audience.

Alternative Genre Assignment: You will write in a genre other than the traditional academic essay. You might choose a form that has been around for a long time (comics, speeches, songs) or one that has popped up recently due to emerging technologies (podcasts, video essays, Twitch streams).

Final Portfolio: Your final portfolio will consist of revised versions of two of the first three assignments you wrote earlier in the year. Another instructor and I will grade the portfolio collaboratively in order to ensure consistent grading procedures within the Writing Program. For this reason, *final portfolios must be turned in on time; no late submissions will be accepted,*

even with a “magic ticket” (see Grading Contract details below). Also, bear in mind that in order to submit a portfolio, you must not be failing the class before portfolio week.

Participation and Attendance: This is a workshop class, which means that participation is the primary means through which you will learn the skills you need. You are expected to join each class with readings completed and thoughts prepared, and with the energy and focus required to listen to and support your peers. This doesn't mean you have to be a talkative extrovert, as there are many other ways you can show your commitment to the class and to your peers: by attending office hours, by sending thoughtful emails, by being committed to the writing process, by listening attentively.

We'll be holding at least one synchronous class per week (meaning we all log onto Zoom at the scheduled time), and missing one will count as an absence. Asynchronous classes will require you to show or submit some work by a required deadline. If you miss this deadline, it will also count as an absence (in addition to the above penalty for late or missing submission).

If you are unable to attend the synchronous class for any reason, let me know *beforehand* and I'll do my best to accommodate you (If you let me know *after* the class, it will count as an absence). Synchronous classes will be recorded, but watching the recording is not a substitute for attending a live class, as it affords you no opportunity to participate.

Regarding the two “free” absences provided by the Grading Contract: I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so there's no need to reach out with an explanation when you miss class. You can use these free absences in any way you wish; however, I strongly recommend that you save them for unexpected illnesses, personal emergencies, and the like, as they will most likely come up. If you accrue *more than six* absences over the semester, it will result in an automatic “F” for the course.

Occasional Work: Good writing is a *process*. Writers read, reflect, take notes, write bits and pieces, keep some, throw some out, put their work aside, pick it back up, tweak it and change it and doubt it and hate it and love it, and then submit it. This process is the difference between writing and talking: if you're writing your paper the night before, you're not actually writing a paper at all; you're just talking to yourself and transcribing it. To keep us committed to the writing process, there will be regular, smaller deadlines throughout the semester.

Course Policies:

Professionalism: You're expected to conduct yourself professionally during our synchronous Zoom classes. This means you're focused on the class, not on your phone, not web-surfing, not playing games, not watching movies, etc.

Assignment Submission: Assignments should be submitted online in the manner and at the time specified on the assignment sheet. If you hand in a paper late, that paper will lose one half-letter grade (i.e. from a B+ to a B) for each 24-hour period that it is late. Papers that are more than a full week late will receive an F.. Please note that failure to hand in any one of the essays by the final day of classes will result in an **F for the course**.

“Office Hours”: As it's a summer class, I will not be holding regular office hours, but I am able to have a one-on-one Zoom meetings with you to answer any questions you might have. All you have to do is contact me at least 24 hours before the desired appointment time, and let me know a few times that would work for you; I'll write back quickly. If you want me to look at drafts, I can do so during these one-on-one Zoom meetings.

Email Policy: If you have any general questions about the course at any point, please email me. If you want to email me about your work-in-progress, I will respond only to specific questions about specific sections of your draft. If you want to discuss more than a paragraph or two of your draft, visit office hours or schedule a meeting.

If you want me to look at your writing, please make sure it is **included in the body of the email**; Do not send it as an attachment.

You should also have realistic expectations about my response time. I usually respond within twenty-four hours, but I usually do not check my emails after 5pm, or on weekends.

Paper Feedback: Please read paper feedback closely, as it is the most valuable site of learning in the course. Please note, though, that, when I give feedback, I focus on the issues that I feel are most significant at this stage of your development as a writer, and that will lead to the biggest improvement in your paper. I will not, however, mention *everything* that could be done to improve your work. You must therefore also exercise your own judgment based on what you have learned in class, and what is stated on the course rubric. In other words, asking me “what should I do to improve my paper?” and then following my instructions does not necessarily guarantee an “A” in the course.

Academic Integrity: Breaches of academic integrity will result in serious penalties at both the program and university levels. Remember that it does not matter if academic integrity violations are intentional or not; it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the relevant section

SCampus in [Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards.”](#) Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and [university policies on scientific misconduct](#). Academic integrity violations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✗ unacknowledged and inappropriate use of ideas or wording of another writer.
- ✗ submitting a paper written or obtained from another person, or by AI software.
- ✗ using a paper or essay (or portion thereof) in more than one class (even if you wrote it yourself) without the permission of both instructors involved.
- ✗ allowing another student to use your work as though it were his or her own.

Make sure that you cite everything in your paper that is not common knowledge or your own invention. If in doubt, cite! For the purposes of this class, “common knowledge” is defined as something that is known by most Americans, regardless of their level of education. So, “Paris is the capital of France” is common knowledge; “The molecular formula for glucose is C₆H₁₂O₆” is not, even though it’s widely known in scientific communities.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism (or are feeling desperate enough to plagiarize), please contact me. I would much rather spend extra time helping you (or grant you an extension) than deal with the consequences of plagiarism. Please note that I will reserve the right to reject essays for which you cannot provide substantial evidence of preparatory work (invention activities, rough plans, rough drafts, etc.).

Freedom of Thought and Classroom Etiquette: Everyone in this class should feel free to share their thoughts and ideas, and should do so in a conscientious and respectful manner. One of the norms of the academic discourse community is respect for others' racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, religious and political beliefs, sexual orientations, and gender. This norm should be respected in your written work, as well as in class discussion.

Self-Advocacy: The university, and everyone that works here, exists to help you develop as a scholar without enduring unnecessary stress and hardship. This is not to say that intellectual work will not be taxing, only that there’s a difference between a fruitful struggle and a needless one. It’s therefore important that you advocate for yourself when you feel you need help and support (because I might not be able to figure it out on my own). It is not an imposition to ask for help with the course, or with any other issue that may arise that might interfere with your ability to create your best work. If I think the problem would be better addressed through other support resources at the college, I won’t turn you away; I’ll direct you towards the resources you need, and make sure you’re taken care of.

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 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 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 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
eeotix.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.symplicity.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.

Grading Contract for Writing 340

THIS CONTRACT guarantees a semester grade of “B” for all students who meet the following conditions:

1. **Attendance (absences and tardies):** You can miss two classes (one week) without incurring a penalty, but after that, penalties are applied. There is no distinction between excused or unexcused absences. Joining the class after the lesson has begun counts as a tardy; three tardies counts as one absence. I take attendance at the start of class; if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to let me know *after class* that you were present so I can mark you as late rather than absent.

2. **Essays (late or missing):** You must complete all four of the major essay assignments on time, and they must meet the minimum assignment criteria as listed on the assignment sheet (pay particular attention to length requirements). Failing to meet *any* of these criteria will result in a penalty in this category. While you cannot receive multiple penalties for a single assignment, you must bear in mind that you must hand in all the essays to pass the course. If one or more essays are missing by midnight on the last day of class, you will receive an “F” in the class.

3. **Coursework:** You will have a variety of tasks assigned to you over the course of the semester. These will be graded as complete or not complete, meaning that you get full marks for meeting the minimum criteria for the assignment by the set deadline, and a penalty in this category if you don’t (there are no part marks for late submission).

4. **Professionalism:** Lapses of professionalism can include, but are not limited to:

- Not signing up for conferences and similar required activities on time.
- Failing to do a scheduled presentation or similar.
- Not demonstrating commitment to peer review sessions (both prior-to and during class).
- Not being on task (texting, surfing, social media-ing) during class.
- Not committing to or staying focused on in-class workshops and group activities.
- Disrespectful behavior directed towards the members of the class.
- Not abiding by our policy for free and responsible expression.

Grading Breakdown

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 on your Portfolio, then you will receive 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 or Incomplete Essays	Late or Missing Coursework	Lapses in Professionalism
B or above, per the Portfolio	2 or fewer	None	2 or fewer	2 or fewer
1 step lower	3		3	3
2 steps lower	4	1	4	4
3 steps lower	5		5	5
4 steps lower	6	2	6	6
5 steps lower	-		7	7
6 steps lower	-	3 (1)	8	8
Automatic F	7	4 (2)	9	9

About Grade Steps: If you've violated the contract, your final grade will be whatever your final portfolio grade is, **minus the contract deductions**. So, if Writing Project 4 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 five lapses in professionalism, **plus** a late essay, your final grade will be lowered by **five steps**. Or, if you have four absences (grade lowered one step), plus four missed items of coursework (grade lowered two steps), your final grade will be lowered by **three steps total**.

“Magic Ticket”: Each student has one (and only one) “magic ticket” 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 a single infraction (you cannot, for example, use it to erase seven absences, or five late ancillary assignments). I will automatically apply your magic ticket to the infraction that affects your grade most significantly; there is no need to contact me to use it.

NOTE: If using the Magic Ticket to remove the penalty for a late paper, please note that you *still need to hand in the paper within two weeks of the original deadline*. Please also note that *no papers will be accepted after the last day of in-person class, even with a Magic Ticket*. Please also note that the Magic Ticket cannot be used to remove a penalty for missing a presentation of any kind.

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 agreed by me **in writing** or they will not count, and you will be held to the original terms of our grading contract.