

**WRIT 150: WRITING AND CRITICAL REASONING
ISSUES IN SUSTAINABILITY**

Section 6430 MWF 11:00-11:50

Section 64715 MWF 12:00-12:50

INSTRUCTOR: Luke Church

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Office Hours:

Time: Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

Location: Zoom, Link will be provided

*Office hours are an opportunity for you to discuss the course and/or your work in progress. They are a great space for you to have specific questions answered or for you to get more individualized feedback on your writing. I will be doing office hours via zoom this semester. If you have class during my office hours, send me an email and we will figure out a time that works for both of our schedules.

Course Description

Welcome to Writing 150! In this course we will be thinking about academic writing as a *process* which requires inquiry, analysis, research, and critical thinking. By highlighting writing as a process, this course will not only focus on the work it takes to develop an essay (brainstorming, outlines, drafts, revision, etc.) but also think about how your writing will be used as a tool for critical inquiry. That is, this course provides you with a framework for developing your writing to answer questions and think critically in a variety of fields and contexts. This course aims to develop your ability and confidence in writing for a variety of audiences (not just your teacher!) so that writing becomes relevant to your life and goals.

Course Thematic: Sustainability

This thematic will promote the development of college-level writing and critical reading skills in the context of sustainability, which, broadly speaking, means the urgent push to develop societies that are environmentally stable, socially just, and economically equitable. In class workshops and through formal and informal writing assignments, students will have the opportunity to investigate sustainability issues like global warming, biodiversity, food access, resource depletion, urban planning, and environmental justice. While the content of this course will revolve around environmental sustainability, our focus will be more on generating our own analysis of this issue through our writing. This course is less concerned with conveying knowledge about sustainability than it is about helping you to generate your own thoughts and analysis on this issue.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course you will be able to meet these curricular defined objectives. Beyond the objectives below, we will think about the relevance of writing to our own lives and goals in order to develop personal and collective learning objectives for our class.

- **Rhetorical Judgement:** Understand writing as an interaction between writer and reader and recognize how to meet the reader's needs. This requires that you maintain your unique point of view while assessing and responding to different rhetorical situations.

- **Critical Reasoning and Ethical Inquiry:** Use writing as a tool of discovery to facilitate genuine inquiry, creativity, personal learning, and independent thinking. This requires you to develop your own thoughts and opinions within an ongoing conversation and to use your writing to interrogate assumptions and ideologies that underlie personal, social, and cultural beliefs.
- **The Craft and Process of Writing:** Develop multiple tools and strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading texts. This course, in particular, highlights writing as a *social* and *collaborative* process. This means that you will develop strategies to work with others in order to generate ideas and communicate them effectively.
- **Writing Conventions and Genre:** Demonstrate knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics. Understanding these conventions will allow you to assess the purpose of what you are writing and how to most effectively engage your own ideas towards that purpose.

While these course objectives detail the desired outcomes for this course as defined by the university, it is also important that you think about what *you* want from this course. What can this course provide for you? What long term and short term goals can it help you achieve? Having your own self-defined learning outcomes will help you realize your investment in this course. We will spend a little time thinking about these as a class.

Required Texts

[Writing 150 Coursebook](#)

Purchase Online through the link. Also available through the USC bookstore.

Other Reading materials will be provided through Blackboard.

Major Assignments and Course Requirements

Writing Projects (WP) 1-3:

Over the course of the semester you will write three argumentative essays, which we call “Writing Projects.” Projects are sequences so that they build off one another, allowing students to apply previous concepts to the upcoming assignment. A specific prompt and writing guidelines will be distributed for each essay. You will submit all Writing Projects through Blackboard.

Final Portfolio:

Your final portfolio will allow you to showcase what you have learned over the course of the semester. The portfolio will include the final draft of Writing Project 3 and a course reflection. These two pieces of writing are graded independently of one another. Writing project 3 accounts for 70% of the portfolio grade and the reflection accounts for 30%.

Ancillary Assignments:

These assignments are smaller homework assignments that you will complete over the course of the semester. They are designed to (1) help you create, shape, and refine your Writing Projects; (2) help you engage more fully with our readings and issues of sustainability; and (3) initiate you in the forms and conventions of the academic discourse community. Much of your ancillary work will be experimental and exploratory in nature and may include assignments like brainstorming activities, reading responses, comments on your classmates’ essay drafts, and reflective writing following the submission of an essay. I will specify where each ancillary assignment should be submitted.

A Note on the Time Requirements of Writing 150:

Writing 150 will make substantial demands on your time. The rule of thumb for college work is that you spend a minimum of two hours of work outside class for every one hour in class. A writing-intensive course such as Writing 150 will no doubt require additional time. Be sure to start working on each writing assignment early and to keep up with the reading/homework schedule. Those of you who do so will be better prepared not only for your upper-division courses at USC, but also for your graduate or professional schoolwork and your future careers. It might help to think about the time commitment in this course as an investment in your future work—by making the time to develop a solid framework for your writing here, you might save time and energy in all of the writing related work you will be doing in your future.

Grading Contract

This class uses a partial “grading contract” as a method for determining final grades. **The Writing 150 Grading Contract guarantees a final grade of at least at “B” for any student who completes all the labor for the class, puts in a good faith effort on all assignments and in class participation, and maintains academic responsibility.** Recent scholarship in the field of Composition and Rhetoric has shown that traditional grading practices often replicate systemic inequality and bias within the classroom. The use of a grading contract attempts to address this issue by centering the work students complete for the class (participation, completing assignments, readings, etc.) and by making the determining factors for grading more transparent for students. By highlighting the labor of the class, a secondary goal of this system is to frame writing as continual process and a messy craft that requires revision, practice, and work rather than a formulaic convention which can be categorized by a single grade.

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	Academic Responsibility
B or above, per the Portfolio	3 or less	None	2 or less	2 or less lapses
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 missing essay)	8	8
Automatic F	9	4 (2 missing essays)	9	9

About Grade Steps: a Grade Step is one grade below. 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.

Free Pass: Each student may have one (and **only** one) “free pass” to use in the event that the terms of the contract are violated. It erases one breach of contract: one absence, one late assignment, or one lapse of academic responsibility. The only exception is that it cannot erase a missing paper. I will apply it automatically at the end of the semester to whatever breach is causing the greatest harm to your grade.

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.

A Note on Academic Responsibility: The goal of the grading contract is to be explicit and transparent about grading. However, “academic responsibility” is a somewhat imprecise term that I will attempt to define here. In general, academic responsibility constitutes any number of areas where your effort goes a long way to helping your own and your classmates’ learning. Academic responsibility means that you are meeting the expectations I define below.

What I Expect From You¹:

- I expect that you will miss no more than 3 classes and complete the work assigned. Not only will your grade suffer if you do not, but you will not get as much out of this class as you otherwise could.
- Learning is a collaborative activity, and I expect you will be attentive to, engaged with, and respectful of everyone in the class.
- I expect that our class be a source of encouragement rather than distress when it comes to interacting with each other.
- I expect you to be respectful of one another. This includes respecting the diverse opinions, ethnicities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, social classes, religious beliefs, and cultural backgrounds among us.
- When addressing peers, I expect you to use their preferred name (and pronunciation, when applicable), as well as their preferred gender pronouns.
- Racist, sexist, xenophobic, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, or discriminatory language of any sort is not tolerated.

¹ Adapted from a syllabus by Sara Deniz Akant, Baruch College.

Course Guidelines and Policies

A Note on Absences

Your presence and participation is essential to your success in this class. As stated in the grading contract you are allowed 3 unexcused absences for the semester. Students who accumulate nine or more absences—regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused—before the Withdraw date are strongly urged to withdraw from the class. According to Writing Program policy, **any such student who does not withdraw, and any student who reaches nine or more total absences after the withdraw date, will fail the course.** Absences for religious holidays or approved university-sponsored events are considered excused absences by the University and generally do not count against your grade. However, if you miss class for either of these reasons, you must give me one week's advance notice and you must arrange to make up any missed work with me.

In addition, I consider most absences due to illness (physical or mental) to be excused absences. It is important that you take care of yourselves and that we take care of each other, so if you feel that you are ill or have been exposed to illness please refrain from coming to class. For an absence due to illness to be counted as an excused absence, you must contact me before the missed class period starts and arrange to make up the work you will miss. When emergency conditions preclude advance notification, you should email me within 24 hours of the missed class period to arrange to make up the work you have missed. If you do not contact me within this time frame or if you do not make up the work you have missed by the deadline that I set, your absence will count as unexcused.

If you miss class, you are responsible for getting the homework, notes, and any other materials from Blackboard and/or from other students.

Conferences

To provide the best opportunity to receive individualized feedback, I will hold one individual paper conference on Zoom for each of the three writing projects that you write. During these meetings, our goal will be to troubleshoot potential problems in your essay and discuss your argument in detail, which I hope will guide you to make more effective revisions. We will schedule these conferences in advance, and I will usually cancel two classes per assignment cycle to accommodate everyone.

For required conferences, you will need to:

1. Have a copy of your essay or other materials, either printed or electronic, to reference during the conference.
2. Come with questions about how you can improve your work
3. Be prepared to take notes.

During the meeting, we will discuss different avenues for improving your work. Note: Missing a required conference without rescheduling will be considered an absence that cannot be made up.

Turning in Work

All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by the date and time indicated on the assignment prompt. While I will not comment on assignments that are turned in by e-mail, if you have technical difficulties with Blackboard, an e-mail can serve as a placeholder until the Blackboard issues are resolved. Don't forget to ask for any extensions in advance!

Word Counts: While most writing projects have word or page counts, these are not hard minimums or maximums. I assess your work on the intellectual and rhetorical world you do rather than on the length requirements. The main concern is whether you have properly understood the intellectual and rhetorical tasks set for you.

File Formats: Title your file name with your last name, first name, assignment designation, and file extension (e.g., Stark, Tony, WP1.docx). All students have access to [a free copy of Microsoft Office](#), and you will need to use it. Unless the directions specify otherwise, all projects must be turned in as a Word document.

Paper Format: Make sure your papers are formatted according to [MLA style](#) guidelines.

The Public Nature of Our Writing Course

We will “workshop” your writing at times throughout the semester, which will allow you to encourage and challenge each other as writers, to learn from the work of your peers, and to further develop a critical eye as you read. This means your classmates may read any assignment you turn in, so always put forth your best effort and never submit anything that you wouldn’t feel comfortable having others read. You will be expected to share your writing with others in the class, so you may want to avoid writing about things you are unprepared to have subjected to public scrutiny or things you feel so strongly about that you are unable to listen to perspectives other than your own. This does not mean that you are not entitled to an opinion but that you should adopt positions responsibly, contemplating the possible effect(s) your arguments will have on others.

Legal Obligation to Report Disclosures

You are welcome at any time to talk with me about what is going on in your life, but I want to make that you aware that if you disclose incidents of violence or sexual assault/rape (whether in conversation *or* in writing) I am legally obligated to report the information to the USC Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX. This **DOES NOT** mean that you need to take any form of action or seek to punish the perpetrator(s). It is just a university-sponsored service making you aware of resources available to you. Please don’t let this reporting procedure deter you from talking with me or writing about traumatic experiences if you feel it would be helpful or appropriate for you to do so.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

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” <https://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>.

Use of AI Tools in Writing 150²:

In accordance with the USC Statement on Academic Conduct above, my expectation in this class is that you will generate your own original ideas and that any written work you submit will be your own. This means that you should not use artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT to compose the content of your assignments. Passing off the work of AI tools as your own constitutes a breach of academic dishonesty. Please note that I reserve the right to use plagiarism checking tools in evaluating your work, including those screening for AI-generated content, and impose consequences accordingly.

In addition to issues of academic dishonesty, there are other reasons to avoid using generative AI in our class. First, AI tools cannot consistently produce writing that meets the standards for this course. You are much more capable than ChatGPT of producing an essay that scores well on the Writing 150 rubric, I promise. Second, using AI tools in our course harms both you and our class community. Your job in Writing 150 is to develop your critical thinking, writing, and communication skills—skills that will be useful to you throughout your time at USC and beyond. These skills are best developed through practice and experimentation, and using AI text generators to produce work for you undercuts this learning process, which ultimately limits your growth as a writer and thinker. In addition, relying on AI tools prohibits you from adding your perspective to conversations about sustainability in authentic ways. This limits our discourse as a class community and also impedes our trust in each other and in verifiable and credible information and analysis in our written work. For all these reasons, I ask that you use your brain as the primary tool for the creation of your work in Writing 150.

All that said, the new developments that we are witnessing in AI are exciting and world changing. AI will certainly play a growing role in our lives. To that end, we will use ChatGPT in class to experiment with the capabilities and limitations of generative AI, as well as to discuss how we might use tools like this ethically and appropriately.

Above all, remember this: I want to hear your unique voice and perspective. Do your own thinking and writing in this course, and I promise you will grow as a communicator in rewarding ways.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center staff can assist you at any stage in the writing process, and they also offer online workshops in matters of grammar and style. I encourage you to take advantage of this free service throughout the semester, especially if you feel you could use extra help with grammar or mechanical issues. You can go online at <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter> to look at their offerings.

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. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

² This statement was crafted by Prof. Corinna Schroeder, who also credits the work of Xiongyi Liu, Kristine Marie T. Reynaldo, Kristy Kelly, and Trinity College's Allan K. Smith Center for Writing and Rhetoric for influencing her statement.

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, workshops, 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 Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

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://dps.usc.edu>

Trojan Shelter - (424) 341-3304
Provides up to one academic year of free housing and three meals a day to students experiencing homelessness. trojanshelter.org

Course Calendar

NOTE: The course calendar is subject to change by instructor. I will provide updated calendars on the class Blackboard.

Wk	Day	Date	Preparation and Reading Due	Assignments Due
1	M	1/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syllabus	
	W	1/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WP 1 Prompt• Dungy, “Is All Writing Environmental Writing?”	
	F	1/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harris, “Introduction”	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harris, "Coming to Terms" 	
2	M	1/15	NO CLASS, MLK BIRTHDAY	
	W	1/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writ 150 Coursebook, Topoi, pp 25-31 	
	F	1/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical Outline Video (by Prof. Patricia Taylor) Logical Outline Models 	AW: Topoi
3	M	1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writ 150 Coursebook, Thesis Development, pp. 40-43; Specialized Paragraphs: Introductions, pp. 66-71 	AW: Draft Questions
	W	1/24	NO CLASS, CONFERENCES	AW: Logical Outline
	F	1/26	NO CLASS, CONFERENCES	
4	M	1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merchant, "Introduction" and "Epilogue" 	
	W	1/31		AW: Rough Draft
	F	2/2		WP 1, Final Draft
5	M	2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 2 Prompt Red Nation, <i>The Red Deal</i> Uyeda, "The Red Deal is an Indigenous Climate Plan that Builds on the Green New Deal" 	
	W	2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harris, "Countering" Harris, "Forwarding" 	
	F	2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simpson, "Introduction: My Radical Resurgent Present" 	
6	M	2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimmerer, Selections from <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> Teves, Smith and Raheja, "Land," <i>Native Studies Keywords</i> 	AW: Annotation Reflection
	W	2/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hayes, "Standing Rock and the Power and Determination of Indigenous America" 	
	F	2/16		AW: Draft Questions
7	M	2/19	NO CLASS, PRESIDENTS DAY	
	W	2/21	NO CLASS, CONFERENCES	AW: Logical Outline
	F	2/23	NO CLASS, CONFERENCES	
8	M	2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writ 150 Coursebook, The Paragraph, pp. 57-64 	AW: Partial Rough Draft
	W	2/28		
	F	3/1		AW: Full Rough Draft
9	M	3/4		
	W	3/6		WP 2, Final Draft
	F	3/8		AW: WP 2 Reflection
10	M	3/11	NO CLASS, SPRING RECESS	
	W	3/13	NO CLASS, SPRING RECESS	
	F	3/15	NO CLASS, SPRING RECESS	
	M	3/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP 3a, 3b Prompts Wallace-Wells, David. "The New World: Envisioning Life After Climate Change." <i>The New York Times</i>. 	

11	W	3/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Táíwò, Olúfèmi O. and Beba Cibralic. “The Case for Climate Reparations.” <i>Foreign Policy</i> Engelman, Alina, et. al. “Global Disability Justice in Climate Disasters: Mobilizing People with Disabilities as Change Agents.” <i>Health Affairs</i> 	
	F	3/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hickel, Jason et al. “Degrowth Can Work—Here’s How Science Can Help.” <i>Nature</i>. 	AW: Issues in Sustainability Mind Map
12	M	3/25		
	W	3/27		
	F	3/29		
13	M	4/1		WP 3a
	W	4/3		
	F	4/5		
14	M	4/8		AW: Logical Outline
	W	4/10		
	F	4/12		
15	M	4/15		AW: Full rough draft
	W	4/17		
	F	4/19		
16	M	4/22		WP 3b
	W	4/24		
	F	4/26		Portfolio Reflection