

Technology & Social Change

College Writing: Spring 2024

WRIT 150 64525

T/Th 11:00 - 12:20 PM – GFS 112

[Class Miro Board](#)

[11:00 am Google Drive](#)

Student Office Hours

[Make Appointment \(link\)](#)

Wed, 11 am - 5 pm via Zoom

M/F times by request

Professor Maddox K. Pennington

(he/him or they/them)

Cherokee Nation

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Office: JEF 102F

Welcome students! Writing 150 will enable you to practice critical thinking, sound reasoning, and rhetorical awareness by investigating questions and topics drawn from your existing interests and experiences. Each WRIT 150 course has a theme to guide these investigations; in our case, **Technology and Social Change**. This is obviously a sprawling and varied area, so to narrow the scope we'll be focusing on **the relationship between innovation and access**, narrowed further by your own choices and research. This might mean looking at how we talk about technology, and whose voices are loudest; or exploring representations of technology in forward-looking TV and movies; or how the relationship between technology and social harms is understood differently in different fields, along with any other connections you make to our course readings and class conversations.

We will approach **writing as a recursive process of critical reading, invention, arrangement, revision, and editing**. This course will also help you to critique arguments and develop your capacity for analysis and complex understanding. Part of this entails getting to know the expectations of the academic discourse community—the community of writers and thinkers that compose the university and the broader world. The texts we produce will respect the needs of readers and model ethical rhetorical work. This means citing sources, accurately attributing ideas, and providing relevant context as we contribute to the public conversation.

Major Assignments:

Writing Project 1: TEDTalk Response Essay (9/23, Monday)

Writing Project 2: Researched Review (10/28, Monday)

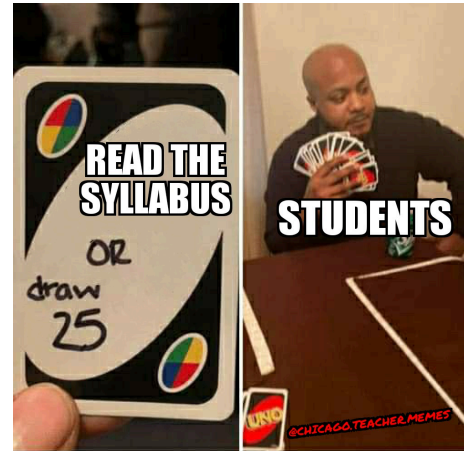
Writing Project 3: Research Essay (11/25, Monday)

Final Portfolio: WP 3 plus a 1-3 page Process Reflection (Dec 6, Friday)

FAQ

Please **review your Class Miro** before emailing your professor about basic housekeeping issues. You are responsible for getting the homework, the notes, and any handouts and materials from the syllabus **and/or from other students**, not from me. Always include the basic components of correspondence when you write--a salutation, a message, and your name.

Under no circumstances should you write the words “did I miss anything in class today?”



Student Office Hours:

Wednesdays, 11 am - 5 pm, Additional M/F times available by request

Office hours are for one-on-one conversations about assignments, readings, in class activities, or your progress in the course. You can [schedule a 15 minute meeting with me](#) throughout the semester to chat via Zoom. If you need additional support, extensions, or resources just ask.

Class Policies and Tools

- **In-Person Classes:** **Masks are strongly recommended.** Our on-campus experience is made possible by vaccinations, collective responsibility, and mutual respect. Please support one another’s efforts and do your part to social distance, wash your hands regularly and mask up.

Do not come to class if you are sick. No explanation is necessary; email me to let me know, then [schedule an office hour appointment](#) to review what you missed.

- **Conferences:** You’ll have three required conferences with me during the semester. After a 5 minute grace period, a “no show” counts as a class absence. **Because of the volume of student meetings I have on conference weeks, I don’t reschedule conferences.** If you must miss a meeting, try to swap with a classmate or schedule a make-up appointment during my next available office hour.

Academic Integrity and the Other AI¹

Tools such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, Bard, and others are now part of the cultural landscape. As in your professional lives, in your academic experience there will be times when using these tools is appropriate and others when there are benefits to not using them. We will work together to identify the opportunities and responsibilities for using these tools. In the meantime, I would like you to commit to the following policies:

1. If it would not be ethical or academically responsible to use an individual person's work in a particular way, do not use AI that way. Consider your goals for the course—will interacting with AI-generated material help you reach them? Would it be fair for me to use AI-generated material as your professor?

2. If you choose to use any form of LLM or generative AI, [document your process in detail](#) using this Assessment form, then include it as the last page in your final draft. This includes Grammarly. Develop an ongoing practice of research tracking and documentation for all of your sourcework. This might look like “One Sheet Notetaking”, PDF or Gdoc comments/annotations, highlighting, or brief reflections after you finish working with a source. Acknowledgment of work with Chat GPT or other AI can be done through standard attribution and citation within a paper²; for example,

MLA Works Cited page entry: “Explain antibiotics” prompt. *ChatGPT*, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 16 Feb. 2023, chat.openai.com. ← *make sure you link to the actual interaction*

MLA in-text citation: (“Explain antibiotics”). ← *appears at the end of the sentence where you quoted the interaction.*

3. When in doubt, Ask The Prof. Make an office hour appointment to talk about your writing process or the outside stress that makes turning to AI an appealing alternative to doing original work. **I would much rather offer you an extension or collaborate on an alternative assignment timeline than read a hastily written robot essay.**

Work that does not reflect the ethical use of other people's scholarship or clear documentation of AI interactions may be treated as a breach of academic integrity.

I reserve the right to determine appropriate consequences based on what I believe will best serve our course, classroom learning, and my responsibilities as a USC faculty member.

¹ Statement adapted from materials created by Patti Taylor, Steve Bucher, Mark Marino, and the Writing Program

² From the Purdue OWL: MLA Guideline: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>

Fostering an Anti-Racist Classroom³

Together, we will create a classroom environment that pursues diversity, equity, and justice. We will strive to support each other and make it safe to be fully ourselves in class. Gaps in our knowledge are an opportunity to grow.

Respect for others' racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, nationalities, immigration statuses, religious and political beliefs, sexual orientations, and gender expressions is a core value that underlies our coursework. There is no room for disrespect of systemically marginalized people or populations in our community. This value should be reflected in your written material and upheld during class discussion. The WRIT 150 curriculum emphasizes seeking and engaging **all viewpoints within an academic discourse community**—not citing “Both Sides...” or engaging in “What aboutism” to deflect from critique or engagement. Defensiveness impedes learning.

In this class, “respect” requires that we confront racism, and its intersection with other institutional injustices, such as sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism. Because this is a learning space, we will engage one another with grace and openness to examining our views, our habits, and our language.

Assume good intent, and ask follow up questions when you have them. Allowing discomfort to exist in the classroom builds trust. Mistakes don't have to define our relationships to each other.

I aim to support diverse learning styles and strive for deep exploration of the topics we choose, collectively and individually. Your role as students includes the freedom to speak up in the moment or to communicate with me privately outside of class, either via email or [this anonymous reporting survey](#).

Thank you in advance for your efforts.

³ adapted from work by Chris Belcher, July 2020

MIRO

Bookmark this link: [11:00 150 Tech & Social Change Miro Board](#)

Miro is a virtual interactive whiteboard where assignments and in-class work are collected and organized. Downloading the Desktop App for Miro may help your computer run more smoothly. All activities, classroom notes, and readings are shared via Miro. You'll always have view access, but some in-class activities may require you to be logged in.

During the first week of classes, use this [Miro Team Invite](#) to create your own account

Sample of Daily Miro Activities

The image shows a Miro board with the following sections:

- Agenda:**
 - Welcome!
 - Brief Course overview
 - Warmup:** 5 min freewrite: Think about your recent online course experiences-- what are the strengths and limitations of taking online courses. What are some best practices we can adopt as a writerly community.
 - Rhetorical Analysis:** What and Why
- Online Course Dos:**
 - Be brave
 - Trust the process
 - Make the class a fun space for sharing opinions
 - Connect with your peer (school and just general life things)
 - Ask questions
 - New brains in class
 - Use many communication modalities
 - Engage your responses
 - Give feedback like for weeks
- Online Course Don'ts:**
 - Don't be distracted during class
 - Don't message people when they're using class
 - Don't have multiple tabs open
 - Don't use your phone during class
 - Don't have a large amount of tabs open
- Rhetorical Analysis in the Real World: A Useful Thinking Tool**
 - Particularly Effective Rhetorical
 - Using familiar rhetorical form
 - Using evidence
 - Using audience experience
 - Using rhetorical context
 - Using current events
- In-Breakout Groups:**
 - Group 1: Observation, Interpretation, Evaluation, Application
 - Group 2: Observation, Interpretation, Evaluation, Application
 - Group 3: Observation, Interpretation, Evaluation, Application

SUBMITTING COURSEWORK

We'll be using [Google Drive](#) this semester as our primary platform for sharing materials, submitting work, and receiving feedback. **Bookmark the folder** and especially the syllabus for easy access. Use your USC Google account to access readings and assignments. [Submit all assignments via this form](#); they'll be returned via the Assignments folder All assignments are due by midnight the night before class, unless otherwise indicated on Miro.

Submit Writing 150 Assignments (Pennington)

Make sure you're following the file naming convention from the syllabus to get full credit for your assignment!

maddoxpe@usc.edu [Switch account](#)

The name, email, and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form

* Indicates required question

Name	↑
Assignment 1A Introductory Letter & "Medium is the Message" Notes	
Assignment 1B Initial Response (TEDTalk notes)	
Assignment 1C 3 ICE Moments	
Assignment 1D Process Draft	
Writing Project 1 Final Draft (9/23)	

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- **Filename:** [Name of assignment] [Name of student] [Date]
 - Assignment 1B, Asta Twelvetrees, 8.27.24
 - Assignment 2C – Mike Thompson 10/4/24
 - Assmt 3A D’Arcy Bloom 11-15-24
- **Format:** Google Doc, Word Docx, or PDF (*not Pages*)
- **Header:** Have your full name, assignment info and the date
- **Spacing:** Double; paragraphs indented
- **Citations:** MLA format for internal citations and Works Cited ([Purdue OWL](#))
- **Submitted:** Be posted to the Class Google Drive on time

Example:

Harry Vanderspiegel
 Pennington WRIT 150-64525
 Assignment 1A Introductory Letter
 8/28/2024

1

Hello Professor,

If this were a real assignment, this is where I would tell you a little bit about what brought me to USC, what else I have going on this semester, and anything else I want you to know in order to best support me as a student. This assignment is mostly to draw your attention to the conventional expectations for a piece of academic writing. Note my indented paragraphs and page numbering. My double spacing demonstrates awareness of my reader. When I cite a source, I use an internal MLA citation so you can trust me to “model ethical rhetorical work” (Pennington, 1). Did you know, once per semester: you can email the professor a gif from *The Greatest Showman* to make up for a late assignment submission? That’s an actual policy they have. You can tell I’ve thoughtfully written, revised and proofread this draft and double checked the file name for correctness instead of “WRIT draft final final FINAL.”

Works Cited

Pennington, Maddox. Syllabus for Writing 150 “Technology and Social Change” Fall 2024,
 University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Writing 150 Grading Contract

This class uses a “grading contract” rather than points or letter values for your final grade. Students are guaranteed a “B” by meeting the following terms, and can raise their grade by completing additional revisions of Final Drafts:

1. Attendance: It is the policy of the Writing Program that missing more than 2 weeks of classes irreparably compromises your full participation in the course. College Writing is interactive, and you need to be present to benefit from it.

You can miss two (2) classes without a penalty, up to four (4) if all absences are excused. Please let me know if you will be missing class, preferably 24 hours in advance. That said, we’re all still coming to school amidst a pandemic, and accessible, disability-informed praxis is one of my core teaching values, so communicate as frequently as you can so we can find reasonable accommodations together.

An “**Excused Absence**” is related to **university-sanctioned events** (such as athletics or religious holidays), or for reasonable cases where you simply cannot attend class—this might include **illness** (mental or physical), **environmental disruptions**, **accidents**, or other **unavoidable mishaps**. Double-booking yourself does not constitute an excused absence.

2. Tardiness: Arriving later than 5 minutes after our scheduled class time counts as a tardy; three tardies counts as one absence.

3. Essays: You must complete all three of the major assignments for class, and they must be handed in on time (11:59 pm PT the night before class unless otherwise indicated). **Late Final Drafts automatically affect your grade. Meaningful revisions of Final Drafts can raise your grade.**

4. Ancillary Assignments: Individual assignments (1A, 2B, 3C etc) contribute to your draft in progress. For each essay, you’ll complete 3-4 ancillary assignments before submitting a full draft. **Late work receives half credit.**

5. Class Citizenship: You need to be an active participant in class. Your written work should meet all requirements and be carefully copyedited and proofread. Work that demonstrates insufficient attention or investment may only receive half credit. Being unprepared for class, conference, or peer workshops affects your citizenship and may lower your grade.

6. Extensions: I will negotiate new deadlines case-by-case. Any new due dates must be **proposed and confirmed in writing** via email or you will be held to the original terms of this grading contract. Be pragmatic—I’d rather you ask for two extra days than two hours, if it means getting work completed thoughtfully. **Prioritize your well-being, respect my time, and think ahead.**

Final Grades

- If you've **met the terms of the contract**, you get a **B** as your semester grade.
- If you've **violated the terms of the contract**, then your final grade is lowered depending on how many violations you've accrued (see table).

For each final draft you *meaningfully* revise during the semester, after meeting with me for feedback, your grade will be raised $\frac{1}{3}$ of a step (e.g. a B to a B+). For example, if you had no grading contract violations and revised WP 1 (Response Essay) and WP 2 (Researched Review), you'd get an A-. If you had 3 unexcused absences and 1 late essay, you could still get a B if you revised all three final drafts.

Note: you can have up to 2 Absences and 2 late Ancillary Assignments without a penalty, but violations are cumulative. Late work is better than unsubmitted work!

*Any essay that remains unsubmitted on the last day of class will drop your grade at least 6 steps and may result in failure. Two unsubmitted essays lead to an automatic F for the semester.

Deductions	Total Unexcused Absences	Late Essays	Late Ancillary Work (missing work counts double)
None	2 or fewer (4 if excused)	None	2 or fewer
1 step lower (B - B-)	3		3
2 steps lower (B - C+)		1	4
3 steps lower (B - C)	4		5
4 steps lower (B - C-)		2	6
5 steps lower (B - D+)	5		7
6 steps lower (B - D)		3	8
Automatic F	6	4	9

Student Support & Resources

[The Writing Center](#): A valuable and free resource available to all students at USC. Experienced consultants will work with you on any stage of the writing process, from interpreting a prompt and creating a rough plan to citing sources and polishing your final draft. The consultants will *not* proofread or edit your paper, but they *will* help you to develop skills to revise your own work and act as a sounding board as needed. Come prepared with:

- A copy of your assignment prompt
- All drafts and prewriting
- Specific questions you'd like them to review with you

[USC Library WRIT 150 Research Guide](#): Selection of databases and research tools

[Office of Student Accessibility Services](#): Assists with students with accommodations in the classroom

[Title IX](#): Responds to harassment or discrimination

[Office of Equity and Diversity](#): similar to Title IX

[RSVP](#): Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention

[Student Health](#): Crisis care as well as routine health appointments

[Trojans Care For Trojans](#): Resource for students who are concerned about other students on campus.

[Kortschak Center](#): Programs and workshops that support study habits and creativity

Writing Project 1

Critical Response Essay

All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments.

– Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, Shepard Fairey
The Medium is the Message (2001)

We are in many ways trapped inside the lopsided imagination of those who monopolize power and resources to benefit the few at the expense of the many. And as I see it, there are two stories these monopolists sell us about what the future holds. . . And in both, we give up power. Both stories assume technology is in the driver’s seat, propelled by a will of its own. In the utopic and dystopic stories, technology impacts us for better or for worse. But our impact on technology, the human inputs, shall we say, are missing. The values, assumptions, interests and needs that shape our digital and physical worlds are nowhere to be seen. To move forward, we have to pull back the screen. Rather than agonizing about a coming dystopia or longing for a future utopia, we have to reckon with ustopia
Ruha Benjamin, “Is Technology Our Savior—or Our Slayer” *TEDTalk* (2023)

Premise: Rhetorical analysis is a versatile tool with a tedious reputation. Identifying two categories of interaction for which it is particularly helpful, “puzzling encounters” and “tricky situations”, writer and teacher Phyllis Mentzell Ryder tells us that “Rhetorical analysis is a tool for digging into language-infused moments to uncover **the networks of values, assumptions, and expectations** that shape how people experience such moments.” She suggests that in overemphasizing *how* to perform rhetorical analysis, we underappreciate *why* we should develop our analytical thinking about all types of encounters we can understand as “texts”, from casual conversations to political data, viral images on social media to our closest relationships.

Successful critical analysis helps us “recognize how [we are] programmed to respond, how [we were] persuaded to feel. . . it offers a way to slow down and pay attention to seemingly small choices that build to something bigger. It gives us a glimpse into how language—whether words or images—shapes our relationships to ideas and to each other” (Ryder).

For our first major assignment, you’ll be writing a Critical Response Essay based on your reaction to a TEDTalk of your choice under the capacious umbrella of technology and social change.

Writing Project 1 (continued)

The TEDTalk is a medium that shapes your reception of the speaker's message—but first, what is your reception of that message? Your primary task is to watch a TEDTalk and pay attention to the author's argumentation, particularly noticing strong rhetorical choices they make that reveal their values, assumptions and expectations. This may lead you to examine key terms they introduce, define and apply in new or surprising ways. How do they craft their tone, select their evidence, and project their authority? Do they use visual aids or serve as the sole focal point for their audience?

I want you to notice where your attention is drawn authentically, organically. Where do your ears prick up? Where do you tune out? What ideas stick with you? Where do you react strongly or find yourself asking questions, or even arguing with the speaker?

Your next task is to interpret the data you've gathered. *Why* do the moments that grab your attention or alienate you have that effect? *How* does the author's choice to deliver this argument in a public forum, speaking directly to the audience (to the camera?) affect your understanding? What does an oral/visual rhetorical approach offer that textual rhetoric might not? And why might that be significant to a reader given our typical experiences of someone communicating with us about technology, and social change? Or our expectation of a TEDTalk as a genre? And finally, so what? What do you want your audience to understand about this TEDTalk in the context of larger conversations on the topic you've chosen?

Prompt: Answer this question in a thesis-driven essay of 3-4 pages:

What does critically analyzing a text reveal about its author and why is that significant to your understanding of the topic or term you've chosen?

Multi Media Texts*

- [Ruha Benjamin: Is Technology Our Savior or Our Slayer?](#) | TED Talk
- [Joy Buolamwini: How I'm Fighting Bias in Algorithms](#) | TED Talk
- [Joe Sabia: The Technology of Storytelling](#) | TED Talk
- [Vinay Venkatraman: Technology Crafts for the Digitally Underserved](#) | TED Talk
- [Poppy Crum: Technology that Knows What You're Feeling](#) | TED Talk
- [Kevin Kelly: How Technology Evolves](#) | TED Talk

***Note:** If none of these talks connect, feel free to explore the TEDTalk Technology playlists and pitch another candidate—the text must involve technology, social change, and an author you'd consider reputable. *How* they make their argument should be as interesting as the argument itself.

Readings

Mcluhan Et Al, [“The Medium is the Massage”](#)

Phyllis Mentzell Ryder: [“Rhetorical Analysis in the Real World: A Useful Thinking Tool,”](#)

Jim Heynen, [“Becoming Your Own Best Critic”](#)

Process Steps:

- **Introduce** your chosen TEDTalk and author to your reader
 - Who, What, When, Why, Where, How
- **Present your observations** of significant rhetorical moments
 - Key terms, multi-modal rhetoric, argumentation, evidence, authority,
- **Explain the impact of those moments**—what did you notice about the speaker’s values, assumptions, and expectations and why does it matter in the context of their presentation?
- **Develop your insight** into your own argument about the significance of these rhetorical moves in a larger social conversation about technology and social change. What do you want your reader to understand?
 - Perhaps apply Ryder’s “Puzzling Encounter” and “Tricky Situation”

Writing Project 1 Calendar

Homework	Date	In Class
<p><i>Due by 11:59 pm PST the night before class</i></p>		
<p>Read the syllabus, bring questions</p>	T 8/27	<p>Welcome to Writing 150 Technology & Social Change</p> <p>Writing a Critical Response Essay</p> <p>Emerging and Experienced Writers</p>
<p>Assignment 1A: Introductory Letter and reflection on <i>The Medium is the Massage</i>.</p> <p>First, download McLuhan et al's The Medium is the Massage – make sure you rotate it – and skim through it. There is a <i>lot</i> going on, so don't feel like you have to grasp every idea, but do pick out a couple of pages, images or quotes that grab your attention.</p> <p>Set a timer and freewrite for about 15 minutes reflecting on those images/quotes/ideas from the text. How does <i>The Medium is the Massage</i> relate to your expectations of how a book, or an academic text, is supposed to work? What did it make you think about?</p> <p>Then, write me a brief letter to introduce yourself–what brought you to USC, what you're studying, what other classes or commitments you have this semester, and anything else I should know to best support you as a student.</p> <p>Include as much of your reflection in your letter as you would like.</p> <p>Check the formatting guidelines for your header and filename, then submit your assignment via the Submission Form. Make sure MaddoxPe@usc.edu has commenting access!</p>	Th 8/29	<p>Writing a Response Essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selecting evidence ● Analysis & interpretation ● Developing insight <p>Multi Media Texts*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ruha Benjamin ● Joy Buolamwini ● Joe Sabia ● Vinay Venkatraman ● Poppy Crum ● Kevin Kelly <p>*Note: If none of these talks connect, feel free to explore the TEDTalk Technology playlists and pitch another candidate–the text must involve technology, social change, and an author you'd consider reputable. <i>How</i> they make their argument should be as interesting as the argument itself.</p>
<p>Assignment 1B: Select the TEDTalk you want to critically respond to and watch it with your full attention (no second or third screening!). Take notes however you'd like (if you like to handwrite or doodle, just take a picture and add that to your doc. Identify some key moments–terms, ideas, gestures, evidence, visual or auditory choices etc–that grabbed your attention for positive or negative reasons.</p>	T 9/3	<p>I.C.E: Introduce, Cite, Explain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observation (What is it) ● Analysis (What does it mean?) ● Interpretation (Why does it matter) <p>Critical Analysis Patterns Allusions</p>

Upload to the Google Drive.		Unstated values
Pull up your selected TEDTalk on your phone, put in headphones, and go for a walk, no place in particular. See if anything changes in your understanding when you're listening, not watching, and when you're moving through space. Do you still notice the same moments? Different moments? Jot down some notes. Add them to your Assignment 1B in the Google Drive.	Th 9/5	Argument Mapping Reasons Evidence Warrants Schedule Conference for next week
Assignment 1C: Write 3 "introduce, cite, explain" gestures using relevant quotes from your TEDTalk and explaining how they relate to the author's argument, what patterns you notice, or what they reveal about the author's values. Upload to Google Drive.	T 9/10	In Class Process Writing Schedule your conference W 9/11, Th 9/12, F 9/13 Sign up closes Tuesday at midnight
Assignment 1D: Process Draft: Upload to the Google Drive. Don't worry about revising, but feel free to fill in any gaps caused by the time constraints.	Th 9/12	No class— Individual conferences via Zoom (this link is directly to the meeting room)
Continue revising your draft. Don't wait til the last minute for formatting and citations	T 9/17	Revision Strategies & Comb Theory
Continue revising your draft.	Th 9/19	Craft Essay Breather "Becoming Your Own Best Critic" Jim Heynan

Writing Project 1 Final Draft:

[Upload to the Google Drive](#) by

Monday, Sep 23, by 11:59 PT