

Syllabus – Fall 2024

Classes Meet:

Tuesdays and Thursdays: in person or online or asynchronous, as per schedule

Sections:

66761: 8am-9:20am

66765: 9:30-10:50am

66771: 11am-12:20pm

66775: 12:30-1:50pm

Location: JFF 312

Office Hours: 8-2pm on Thursdays via Zoom (starting week 3 of the semester) with 24-hour notice on signup sheet only; and by individual arrangement

Zoom Office ID# 732 093 2365

Professor: Lee R. Cerling, Ph.D.

Office: ACC 401

Email: cerling@usc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Advanced Writing for Business is designed to help you produce clear, effective writing in the context of any business or professional environment. You can succeed in this kind of writing by improving your skills in grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and applying them in business-related communications.

In this course, we understand business writing as that kind of writing aimed at helping individuals achieve business-related goals. Every semester or so, I change the main topic *vis-à-vis* business writing. In this version of 340, our reading, thinking, and writing will be related largely to current events, specifically as they are presented in **articles, editorials, and book reviews from the Wall Street Journal**. The *Wall Street Journal* is the single most widely read source of information and commentary on business matters in America, with a larger daily print circulation than *USA Today* and the *New York Times*, the next two largest printed newspapers in America, combined. Both the writing and the topics in the *Wall Street Journal* should prove instructive to anyone interested in learning the art of business communication.

In addition, because of the recent appearance of AI writing programs such as ChatGPT, we will be exploring the benefits and drawbacks of AI-based writing technology, and begin to develop a critical assessment of the technology *vis-à-vis* its likely impact on business and society.

This class should improve your ability to think clearly, to test your ideas, and to write clear and effective arguments on behalf of communication goals that you care about. Put another way, as a result of your work in this class, you should better understand how to use language to inform and persuade others, especially in professional contexts.

The format of this course largely consists of in-class discussions and writing exercises, tutorial sessions, a team project, a careful reading of a self-selected book, and individual writing assignments. Some of the class instruction will be asynchronous.

On a very practical level, the topics covered range from word-, sentence-, and paragraph-level issues of correctness, conciseness, coherence, and clarity to more global considerations of argumentation, organization, and audience. On a somewhat more theoretical level, students will be given a basic introduction to the resources available to them in the fields of grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and begin to develop an understanding of the necessary interrelations between those three vast fields. On a personal level, it is hoped that through this class, students will become “friends” with writing—recognizing in the act of writing a valuable ally in their own professional, social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course focuses on improving your understanding of the basic principles of good writing and how you may use these principles to write effectively in a variety of business-related contexts. You will learn to write more effectively by learning a specific **style** of writing especially recommended for use in business which is officially called *Plain English*.

Specifically, at the end of the course you will be able to:

1. **Recognize and implement** the qualities associated with effective business writing, particularly the hallmarks of ‘Plain English’ and its “4Cs”: conciseness, coherence, clarity, and correctness;
2. **Identify and evaluate** communication goals for diverse audiences and make effective and appropriate choices about the tone, style, and form the communication should take, taking care to be respectful of the diversity of audiences;
3. **Select and strategically utilize** traditional and new communication media;
4. **Plan, create, and complete** a variety of business documents—including, for example, memos, letters, emails, blog posts, proposals, and reports—using appropriate headings, layout, and typography;
5. **Conduct** research using a broad range of sources;
6. **Synthesize** and **evaluate** the quality of collected information;
7. **Support** written claims with logical and persuasive reasoning, and **critique** the reasoning in the writing of others;
8. **Understand** the importance of business ethics and its implications for business and business communication;
9. **Collaborate** productively with others in completing writing and editing tasks;
10. **Express** your ideas and conduct yourself in a professional manner that is respectfully mindful of others, including those issues pertaining to diversity and inclusivity.

All of the above apply not only to traditional business writing, but also to any professional communication via electronic media. Business today functions primarily in a digital environment and proficient writers must be adept at using the internet and the tools e-communication provides.

Required Materials

Burton, Gideon O. *Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric*. Online website. <http://rhetoric.byu.edu>. Peerceptiv subscription. [note: you must purchase access to Peerceptiv] [Information on how to access Peerceptiv here](#).

Wall Street Journal. [free on-line subscription available via USC/Marshall library]

Williams, Joseph M., and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (13th ed.). 2021.

[Note: the 13th edition is a rental-only edition, and available from the publisher. Earlier print editions can be found for purchase at various online bookstores and can be used for this course; however, editions earlier than the 10th will be unsuitable for this class.]

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. *A Plain English Handbook: How to Create Clear SEC Disclosure Documents*. [no date] .pdf file. Available at <https://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf>.

Other required articles will be provided throughout the course.

Also required: select one (1) of the following books to read (or a book of your own choosing approved in advance by the instructor). You will summarize 1/8 of the book weekly for 8 weeks in preparation for an end-of-semester book review that will constitute paper #3.

Difficulty levels (note that the harder texts will be graded somewhat more leniently than easier ones)

***** Professional/graduate school

**** Advanced undergraduate

*** Undergraduate

** high school/beginning undergrad

Alter, Adam. *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*. **** (2017)

Did you know that Steve Jobs wouldn't let his own children have an iPad? In this fascinating book, Adam Alter shows how modern iPads, iPhones, and social media platforms are actually designed to keep us addicted so that companies can make money at the expense of our health and well-being. A sobering, sometimes infuriating, but always engaging and informative read.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. *****

Many today, on the left and right of the political spectrum, worry that America is entering a period of totalitarian rule. (That would obviously have enormous implications for business and society!) But is it really? This book is widely acknowledged as the single most definitive study of totalitarianism, written nearly 75 years ago by Hannah Arendt, a brilliant mid-20th century philosopher and political theorist. (She is still known for her phrase, "the banality of evil," by which she meant evil unmotivated by traditional vices such as greed, jealousy, lust for power, etc., but still powerful, nevertheless, in that it was the kind of evil that she saw at work in the dully bureaucratic genocide of the Jews in WWII as orchestrated by people such as Adolph Eichmann.) This landmark study is still full of surprises, and still can shatter many illusions and myths that people believe today about the true roots and characteristics of totalitarianism. For those interested in this topic, this is one good place to start. Fair warning: it is fairly difficult; it will require perseverance on your part to read. On the other hand, you will learn an enormous amount.

Bilott, Robert. *Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer's Twenty-Year Battle Against Dupont*. (2019) ****

The Amazon website describes this book as "the incredible true story of the lawyer who spent two decades building a case against DuPont for its use of the hazardous chemical PFOA, uncovering the worst case of environmental contamination in history—affecting virtually every person on the planet—and the conspiracy that kept it a secret for sixty years." This is the story behind the 2019 movie, *Dark Waters*, as told by the lawyer who has doggedly pursued it, at enormous personal cost to himself. A thrilling and disturbing tale which is unfortunately the more disturbing for being true.

Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. ***** (1987)

How do you really feel about the college education you have received? Have you been well-served by it? Allan Bloom, who died in 1992, received his bachelor's degree at the age of 18 from the University of Chicago. He wrote this devastating critique of American higher education at the end of his illustrious career as a political philosopher, and was greatly surprised that the book became a best-seller. In it, he makes many counter-intuitive arguments, including the argument that moral and cultural relativism has led to an increasing rigidity and close-mindedness, an undermining of "critical thinking," general dissatisfaction with life (including sex), and a disdain for achievement

and Western culture. When I first read this book in 1987, I mostly felt a sense of anger that my education had not prepared me well enough to even discern whether his arguments from history and classical texts were on the mark or not. Reading it now, I feel mostly a sense of sadness that he was correct, but largely ignored; and that the effects on today's students of the mal-education they are receiving are even more devastating to them now than when he wrote the book in 1987. This is a landmark analysis of American higher education; it could also be considered a lament.

Bogdanich, Walt, and Michael Forsythe. *When McKinsey Comes to Town: The Hidden Influence of the World's Most Powerful Consulting Firm*. (2022) ****

This is a *New York Times* bestseller and Amazon Editor's pick for Best Book of 2022. It is described as "an explosive, deeply reported exposé of McKinsey & Company, the international consulting firm that advises corporations and governments, that highlights the often drastic impact of its work on employees and citizens around the world." For those of you interested in getting into consulting, law, or accounting—or if you are just interested in understanding something of the powerful behind-the-scenes shakers and movers in our modern society—this would be a significant book to know.

Boorstin, Daniel. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. (1962; 1987; 1992). ****

Here is a book which, as is sometimes said of particularly good books, is "perhaps more relevant now than when it was originally written." In the twentieth century, particularly with the rise of mass media (radio, television, and newspapers), journalism, advertising, and the field of what came to be called "Public Relations," thoughtful observers began to notice that society, and the people within it, were changing in strange new ways, and not always for the better. Daniel Boorstin was one of many highly educated, extraordinarily insightful analysts of how "images" came to dominate and alter the thinking of modern people. If one wishes to have a clear understanding of how today's social media and the Internet are changing society, this book is indispensable reading.

Burgis, Tom. *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Tycoons, Smugglers and the Systematic Theft of Africa's Wealth*. **** (2016)

[A *Financial Times* and *Spectator* Book of the Year.] Why is it that Africa has much of the most valuable mineral wealth on the planet—oil, gold, natural gas, diamonds, uranium, etc.—and yet is plagued by grinding poverty and unspeakable violence? The answer to this sad question is a true tragedy, involving powerful individuals, corporations, and governments on every continent. This book strives to tell something of that story; but one senses that the author has only touched the tip of an iceberg. I cannot say that it is well-written—I wish the author could learn the lessons that we learn in this class about how to write well! But no one with any interest in ethics, human rights, and the role and responsibility of business in the 21st century should be ignorant of the realities depicted in this book. A somewhat difficult book to read, due to the author's needlessly opaque writing style, but the content is worth the labor to read it.

Carreyrou, John. *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup*. ***

Amazon describes this book as "the gripping story of Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos—one of the biggest corporate frauds in history—a tale of ambition and hubris set amid the bold promises of Silicon Valley, rigorously reported by the prize-winning journalist." It includes this blurb from a *NY Times* review: "Chilling ... Reads like a thriller ... Carreyrou tells [the Theranos story] virtually to perfection." This story is still unfolding; follow latest developments in the *Wall Street Journal*. Students who have read this book in prior semesters give it strong positive reviews.

Conway, Ed. *Material World: The Six Raw Materials that Shape Modern Civilization*. (2023) ****

It is easy to forget that everything—*everything*—we see around us, every day, that is not in a raw state of nature, such as rocks, trees, and clouds, is extracted from the earth. Houses, roads, cars, paper, desks, floors, computers, dishes, backpacks—everything is extracted from the earth. According to the *Wall Street Journal* review of this book, "In sheer volume today, the extraction of the most scrutinized of those materials—oil—is dwarfed by the other five: sand, salt, iron, copper

and lithium.” Who knew? Much nonsense is talked about these days about “sustainability.” Sustainability in itself is a great goal; but it is impossible to have any kind of sustainable future without understanding the realities behind where all our “stuff” comes from. This book should help create at least a little of that understanding.

Dalrymple, Theodore. *Our Culture, What’s Left of It.* **** (2005)

Theodore Dalrymple (a pseudonym) practiced psychiatry in many of the world’s most psychologically devastated places, including British inner-city hospitals and prison system. He uses his experience with those at the bottom of society’s ladder to analyze what is most problematic about life in contemporary society. As a result, he has become one of the keenest and best observers of contemporary society. If you are one who wonders what has gone wrong with society, this book will give you much food for thought.

Deneen, Patrick J. *Why Liberalism Failed* **** (2015)

Despite its title, this is a non-partisan book, in that “liberalism” in this book refers to both Democrats and Republicans, both “conservatives” and “liberals.” Widely praised by both liberals and conservatives, political scientist Patrick Deneen argues that our society’s increasingly dysfunctional political, economic, educational, and cultural life is a direct and necessary result of “liberalism.” Here we are not talking in traditional left and right categories of Democrat and Republican—in Deneen’s definition, both Democrats and Republicans are “liberals.” In this book, “liberalism” is defined very broadly, and means the cultural and political beliefs that have created all modern Western nations—namely, our beliefs that democracy, human rights, science, free markets, and progress are self-evidently good goals for society, and that the best possible societies are ones that pursue these goals. Deneen argues, somewhat shockingly, that we can now say definitively that this package of beliefs is intrinsically self-defeating, and cannot possibly deliver the benefits to society that it was thought they would bring. More disturbingly, he argues that pursuit of these goals will *necessarily* bring about the very harms to society that “liberalism” was explicitly designed to prevent. An important contribution to a larger cultural conversation.

Ellul, Jacques. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes.* (1965) *****

Everyone knows we are now constantly subjected to fake and heavily biased news. How to understand its influence, on ourselves and others? This classic study of propaganda from the 1960’s challenges our contemporary apathy and intellectual slumbers with respect to our current media environment. For one thing, Ellul argues persuasively that both the East and West, both socialist and capitalist societies are heavily subjected to propaganda. More disturbingly, he argues that those who have achieved the highest rank in both societies are themselves the **most susceptible** to propaganda, for at least three reasons: 1) they believe themselves to be the least susceptible; 2) they maintain their elite status by internalizing and repeating the current propaganda; and 3) they deliberately cut themselves off from local communities and religious traditions that alone provide members with some means to resist propaganda. A challenging and eye-opening book. (Note: This is a difficult book. Don’t take it on unless you are prepared to do some hard reading!)

—. *The Technological Society.* (1964) *****

This book is indispensable for anyone seriously interested in understanding the impact of technology on contemporary civilization. The picture he paints is not pretty. He argues that what he calls *techne*, or “the spirit of technique,” takes over a society (as it has for all modern societies), then **everything** in the society becomes subordinate to technique—and by **everything,** he means the economy, business, religion, law, education, the family, sex, human relations, and so forth. Among his many disturbingly prescient predictions, he says that societies with political philosophies as different as communism and democracy (i.e., China and USA) will use **exactly** the same techniques of surveillance and control and propaganda to achieve their ends. Also, he predicted that the first means that governments would use to control and coerce their citizens would be some sort of medically-based “emergency.” This is also a hard book to read; it assumes a willingness to work to understand what you don’t know.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*. ****

Amazon's summary: "Niall Ferguson follows the money to tell the human story behind the evolution of our financial system, from its genesis in ancient Mesopotamia to the latest upheavals on what he calls Planet Finance. What's more, Ferguson reveals financial history as the essential backstory behind all history, arguing that the evolution of credit and debt was as important as any technological innovation in the rise of civilization. As Ferguson traces the crisis from ancient Egypt's Memphis to today's Chongqing, he offers bold and compelling new insights into the rise--and fall--of not just money but Western power as well." See also the fantastic [PBS 4-part documentary based on the book, which you can find here: https://www.pbs.org/wnet/ascentofmoney/](https://www.pbs.org/wnet/ascentofmoney/).

Foucault, Michel. *Fearless Speech*. ****

Foucault is not normally regarded as a particularly clear writer, but this very brief collection of six lectures given at U Cal Berkeley in the Fall of 1983 is an important and interesting exception. In this fascinating study, he traces the origins of the Western concept of "freedom of speech", or "free speech". It is an inspiring and invigorating study, and well repays the effort to read it. Given the increasing controversy of this concept in our current cultural moment, it is an important book to be familiar with, whether for your professional or your personal life.

Frankopan, Peter. *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. **** (2015)

For most of the last three thousand years, the centers of wealth and military power were not primarily in Europe, but among the vast network of roads that connected the countries we know today as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Khazakstan, Russia, Ukraine, China, and India, to name a few. In a very readable style, Peter Frankopan focuses especially on the history of business and trade along these routes. In so doing, he tells the story of these great civilizations, and the role they played in shaping the world yesterday, and today.

Giridharadas, Anand. *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*. ****

Can social justice-minded philanthropists and foundations solve the problems of social justice that they aim to solve? One would think they are the best equipped to do so, given the enormous amount of financial resources that they wield. In this book, former *New York Times* reporter Anand Giridharadas, who once believed this, and has worked among many of them, shows why this belief is likely mistaken, and why he has come to believe that the foundations and philanthropists actually perpetuate the very problems they are intending to solve. As the Amazon summary of the book states, "Giridharadas takes us into the inner sanctums of a new gilded age, where the rich and powerful fight for equality and justice any way they can—except ways that threaten the social order and their position atop it." It is yet another example of how our well-intended policies may not have the social outcomes that we actual desire.

(Hayek, Frederick.) *The Essence of Hayek*. Ed. by Chiaki Nishiyama and Kurt R. Leube. ***** (1984)

Frederick Hayek was a brilliant Austrian economist who won the Nobel prize in economics. This book is an anthology of his work. He is one of the greatest intellectuals of the 20th century; certainly one of the most brilliant economists in the 20th century. If you are an economist or interested in economics, this is a great introduction to his thought. If you are interested in the war of ideas that pits capitalism and socialism against each other, familiarity with his thought is indispensable.

Higham, Scott, and Sari Horwitz. *American Cartel: Inside the Battle to Bring Down the Opioid Industry*. ****

Here is Amazon's description of this book: "*American Cartel* is an unflinching and deeply documented dive into the culpability of the drug companies behind the staggering death toll of the opioid epidemic. It follows a small band of DEA agents led by Joseph Rannazzisi, a tough-talking New Yorker who had spent a storied thirty years bringing down bad guys; along with a band of lawyers, including West Virginia native Paul Farrell Jr., who fought to hold the drug industry to account in the face of the worst man-made drug epidemic in American history. It is the story of underdogs prevailing over corporate greed and political cowardice, persevering in the face of predicted failure,

and how they found some semblance of justice for the families of the dead during the most complex civil litigation ever seen....The investigators and lawyers discovered hundreds of thousands of confidential corporate emails and memos during courtroom combat with legions of white-shoe law firms defending the opioid industry. One breathtaking disclosure after another—from emails that mocked addicts to invoices chronicling the rise of pill mills—showed the indifference of big business to the epidemic’s toll. The narrative approach echoes such work as *A Civil Action* and *The Insider*, moving dramatically between corporate boardrooms, courthouses, lobbying firms, DEA field offices, and Capitol Hill while capturing the human toll of the epidemic on America’s streets.”

Holland, Tom. *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*. (2019)

To think about ethics and business, one must have a clear understanding of where our ideas about ethics and business come from. This book will teach you a great deal about that. It is very long, but very readable—the author has a wonderful narrative style. This book is like a mini-course in Western history as told by a great professor. Read the following description of the book on Amazon to see if the book would be of interest to you:

“Crucifixion, the Romans believed, was the worst fate imaginable, a punishment reserved for slaves. How astonishing it was, then, that people should have come to believe that one particular victim of crucifixion -- an obscure provincial by the name of Jesus -- was to be worshipped as a god. *Dominion* explores the implications of this shocking conviction as they have reverberated throughout history. Today, the West remains utterly saturated by Christian assumptions. As Tom Holland demonstrates, our morals and ethics are not universal but are instead the fruits of a very distinctive civilization. Concepts such as secularism, liberalism, science, and homosexuality are deeply rooted in a Christian seedbed. From Babylon to the Beatles, Saint Michael to #MeToo, *Dominion* tells the story of how Christianity transformed the modern world.” — Amazon

The Holy Bible. **** (directed reading)

Here we have the single most important book (or rather, collection of books) in Western history; yet today, few people, even college-educated people, have much of an idea at all of its content. It is impossible to tell the story of the West—its art, architecture, landscape, wars, language, philosophy, science, education, justice system, business practice, etc., etc.—without reference to this book; yet few remember much about it anymore. In fact, a good explanation either of the architecture of USC, or of the protests that periodically roil our campus, would, to be thorough, require one to speak of the Bible. Why not spend some time reading it this semester? It has had a direct influence on our sense of ethics and human rights; deeply shaped our ideas about fair and unfair business practices; and most importantly, provides a vigorous challenge to our societal capitulation to a consumer-based economy. **Note: If you choose this option, you don’t have to read the whole thing! Instead, see me, and I will assign selected texts depending on your interests, questions, and prior knowledge. Also, if there are enough students interested in this option, we might form a discussion group based on your various readings.*

Kara, Siddarth. *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of Congo Powers Our Lives*. **** (2023)

Which is more important: fighting against climate change or human rights? What if you can only choose one or the other, not both? Our culture does not want to face the reality of moral hierarchies—that some things that we want must have precedence over others. Here in this book, the issue is starkly presented: in order that our cell phones, laptops, computers, and especially electric vehicles do not burst into flames whenever we recharge them, they require cobalt. The people who mine cobalt are the subject of every possible kind of human exploitation: enslavement, rape, torture, unfair wages, lethal working conditions, and so forth. Who is to blame? Well, as it turns out, everyone—the capitalist, Western, multinational tech companies like Google, Apple, and Tesla that create these consumer products; the socialist, Chinese, Eastern companies that own and run the mines; the corrupt governments that enable the exploitation; the NGO’s that are supposed to certify the safety of the mines; and, of course, you and me—everyone who purchases a cell phone, laptop, electric vehicle, or anything else with a rechargeable battery.

The author makes a convincing case that the push to reduce climate change will necessarily involve the brutal exploitation and death of many thousands and even millions of the “hidden people” of this planet, who produce our food and cars and phones. No easy or obvious answers here, but some very important issues raised—especially about how measures intended to limit climate change may have devastating effects on the people who must implement them.

Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* *****

A psychologist who won a Nobel prize in Economics(!), Kahneman explains in simple terms why you (and everyone else!) often makes the wrong decisions and judgements about all kinds of important and semi-important matters. A must-read for those interested in management, consulting, psychology, organizational behavior, and business decision-making. The numerous studies reported in this book are the foundation of an entire new branch of economics, which now goes by the name of “Behavioral Economics.” (Hence, the Nobel prize.)

Kotkin, Joel. *The Coming of Neo-Feudalism: A Warning to the Global Middle Class* ***

Joel Kotkin is a Los Angeles-based freelance journalist, with in-depth knowledge of urban and societal trends, and deep knowledge of California. A very clear and engaging writer who does not neatly fall on the right or left politically, he argues, using lots of data (especially from California!), that we are becoming a feudal society again.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. ****

Have you ever heard of the term “paradigm shift”? It comes from this book. It refers to how “scientific revolutions” occur historically. Especially in the era of COVID and climate change, fierce debates have broken out about the importance of “listening to the science.” Unfortunately, most of these debates proceed from a nearly complete ignorance of what “science” actually is, and how it actually works. In this groundbreaking 1962 work of history, philosophy, and science, Thomas Kuhn shows how science does and does not progress. If you read this book, you will be much more well-equipped to “listen to the science”—and you will likely listen with a much better understanding, and a more critical mindset, than the vast majority of people who pretend to speak “in the name of science.”

Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. **** (1979)

Lasch is widely acknowledged as one of the most insightful analysts of American culture; this is perhaps his most famous book. If you want to know the conditions of American culture that paved the way for the dysfunction that we see in our society today, this book (together with Allan Bloom’s *Closing of the American Mind*; see above) is indispensable. Bloom’s book is concerned especially with the intellectual foundations of today’s malaise; Lasch focuses much more on the role of therapeutic psychology, business, and sports, among other topics. Do you wish to understand the society you are living in? A must-read.

Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. (1943) ****

C.S. Lewis is today mostly remembered for his 7-volume children’s work, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and his works of Christian apologetics. But he was also a keenly perceptive analyst of culture and society, and foresaw many of the cultural conflicts and problems in education, society, science, and the media that we are wrestling with today. He was a rare intellect, who, despite writing more than seventy-five years ago, is still widely read and appreciated today by many different kinds of audiences, including children, science fiction fans, cultural critics, philosophers, and literary scholars. This book is a collection of three lectures that he gave, contemplating the future of society from his vantage point in the middle of WW II in England. It is extraordinarily prescient. Unfortunately, it is a little difficult to read today, as it is aimed at a mid-century, well-educated British audience. It is probably the shortest book on this reading list; but it will demand reading and re-reading over the course of the semester to fully understand.

McIntyre, Alisdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. (1981; 1984; 2007) *****

Do you ever wonder why we are so confused as a culture about how to live the best possible, and the most ethical, life? This is a philosopher's answer to that question. This is one of the landmark books of philosophy and ethics in the second half of the twentieth century. With this book, McIntyre, already a famous philosopher, and at the time of writing a Marxist, single-handedly revived widespread philosophical, historical, and popular interest in the topic of Virtue. But the book consists primarily of McIntyre's argument as to how and why, historically speaking, philosophers lost interest in the topic of Virtue; and how that has been devastating to philosophical ethical thought for centuries. Probably students with no background in philosophy will find this heavy going; but with those with some philosophical background—or students who have been exposed to Catholic/Thomistic thinking about virtue—this book should prove illuminating.

McLean, Bethany, and Joe Nocera. *All the Devils Are Here: The Hidden History of the Financial Crisis*. ****

This may be the most readable of the many books published on the 2008-2009 financial crisis. It shows clearly how the financial crisis that nearly wrecked the entire global financial system was rooted in unethical, self-serving behavior at every level: individual borrowers, mortgage brokers, big banks, the major accounting and investing firms, the ratings agencies, and the United States Congress, to name but a few. Had any one of these sectors acted ethically, the crisis could have been averted. But every actor in the system was "a devil"—and surprise, surprise!—they are all still around today. An excellent read for understanding the 2008-2009 financial crisis, and to understand lingering threats to our economy and society today.

McLean, Bethany, Peter Elkind, and Joe Nocera. *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*. ****

It was an article from Bethany McLean in *Fortune* magazine questioning Enron's financial statements that sprung the leak in the giant dam that had long protected Enron from critical scrutiny. Once the leak was sprung, the damage got bigger and bigger, and finally the whole structure collapsed. This is a story well worth knowing, as it will help you better anticipate and understand other major business scandals when they occur. The implicit point of the title, by the way, and one college students should particularly bear in mind, is that being "smart" is by no means the highest or best of human accomplishments, however much society and your own schooling may have indicated otherwise.

McCloskey, Deirdre. *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce* *****

McCloskey, born Donald McCloskey, is a brilliant, polymathic economist who cannot be easily pigeon-holed. She is unfailingly clear and engaging in her writing style and argumentation, but her books are very long. For those interested in an intellectually mind-blowing journey, any of her vast number of writings will do. But please do not undertake to read this book unless you are an advanced reader, preferably with a strong background in either economics or political theory. If you are not an advanced reader, this book will overwhelm you.

McWhorter, John. *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America* ****

John McWhorter is a very famous and brilliant black linguist at Columbia University, who has published voluminously on matters pertaining to race, ethnicity, and language. Controversial. Brilliant. Whatever you think about the world, he will challenge you to think about it differently. I can't imagine there are many people who would agree with him about everything; but few would dispute that he is right about many things.

Novak, Michael, *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* ***

For those who are worried that life in business will be morally compromising, Novak provides a positive way to understand business as a deeply ethical calling, and as a service to society and one's neighbors, from his perspective as a Catholic.

O'Rourke, P.J. *Eat the Rich*. ***

P. J. O'Rourke was a political satirist and journalist who died in 2022. Humorists who write about politics (such as Mark Twain, H.L. Mencken, or Will Rogers) typically combine unusual intelligence with a sharp eye for hypocrisy, contradictions, and other human foibles that are rife in the political world. P.J. O'Rourke is no exception. This particular book is one in which he visits a large number of countries (such as America, Hong Kong, Sweden, Albania, Russia, and so forth) to contrast and compare their economic systems, especially focusing on differing versions of capitalism and socialism. This is by far the easiest book on this list to read; definitely the most entertaining; and yet possibly as intellectually eye-opening as any of the others. It is now somewhat dated, but still worth a read.

Peterson, Jordan. *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*. ****

Jordan Peterson is a highly controversial figure, but a reader of this book might wonder why. This is not a book about either politics or business, but a book about how we can helpfully order our lives in a world that tends to make life chaotic. As such, it could fall into the category of "professional self-help" books. Peterson is an academic psychologist, but he has achieved an enormous following by sharing his views on society and culture in a wide variety of public forums. In 2018, the *New York Times* columnist David Brooks described Peterson as "the most influential public intellectual in the Western world." Much of his popularity, together with his unpopularity (!), stems from his willingness to challenge widespread societal views and assumptions that have become *de rigueur* (i.e., required by etiquette or current fashion). This book offers his views on how to live life wisely and well.

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. (2007) ****

What should we eat? Pandas don't have to deal with this question: they will eat bamboo. Human beings, however, and other omnivores do have to think about it; and it turns out that it is a real puzzle—witness the multi-million dollar dieting industry. This book is a fascinating investigation into what our actual options are with respect to the food we eat. The author, a senior journalism professor with specialties in science, environmentalism, and food, leads the reader on a fascinating journey of discovery about our food system, beginning with McDonald's. In this book, he creates or purchases four very different meals, starting with a McDonald's Happy Meal, and then traces it all back to its origins—the chicken, the corn, the beef, the sugar. In the process, you learn an enormous amount about our food system; and you also learn that the answers to creating a food system that serves everyone well are by no means obvious. A fascinating study for anyone interested in food, health, environmentalism, and/or sustainability issues.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. ***

Sometimes we can get a better perspective on our own age by looking back through the lenses of people from an earlier era. In 1985, long before the Internet appeared, communication scholar Neil Postman warned in this book that our love of televised entertainment was ruining all of our most important institutions—law, family, politics, education, religion. In retrospect, his book looks prophetic indeed. It can be understood as a follow up to Daniel Boorstin's *The Image*, described above, but with easier reading and more contemporary examples.

Soll, Jacob. *The Reckoning: Financial Accountability and the Rise and Fall of Nations*. ****

Jacob Soll is a USC professor who won the McArthur Genius Award for this book. It is the fascinating(!) story of how knowledge of accounting (yes, accounting!) has led to the rise and fall of the Western empires, including Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, France, England, and the United States. An absolute must-read for anyone with an interest in business or accounting.

Sowell, Thomas. *Discrimination and Disparities*. ****

—. *Economic Facts and Fallacies*. ****

Sowell is a brilliant black economist, who regularly punctures economic myths about our world with lots of hard data and insightful arguments. For this reason, he is widely despised by those who do not share his views.

Thanhauser, Sofi. *Worn: A People's History of Clothing*. ****

For those of you interested in the fashion industry, here is an important book. This book was listed as a "Best Book of the Year" by the *New Yorker*. Here is Amazon's description: "In this panoramic social history, Sofi Thanhauser brilliantly tells five stories—Linen, Cotton, Silk, Synthetics, Wool—about the clothes we wear and where they come from, illuminating our world in unexpected ways. She takes us from the opulent court of Louis XIV to the labor camps in modern-day Chinese-occupied Xinjiang. We see how textiles were once dyed with lichen, shells, bark, saffron, and beetles, displaying distinctive regional weaves and knits, and how the modern Western garment industry has refashioned our attire into the homogenous and disposable uniforms popularized by fast-fashion brands. Thanhauser makes clear how the clothing industry has become one of the planet's worst polluters and how it relies on chronically underpaid and exploited laborers. But she also shows us how micro-communities, textile companies, and clothing makers in every corner of the world are rediscovering ancestral and ethical methods for making what we wear." It is not an easy or particularly enjoyable read; but if you are interested in the fashion industry, you should probably know this book.

Toffler, Barbara Ley. *Final Accounting: Ambition, Greed and the Fall of Arthur Andersen*. ***

Especially for accountants: do you know about Arthur Andersen, which until Enron was considered the best and most prestigious of all of the major accounting firms? This is the sobering story of its demise, and should serve as a useful cautionary tale as you consider your own future careers in the field.

Xi, Lian. *Blood Letters: The Untold Story of Lin Zhao, a Martyr in Mao's China*. ****

For those with a passionate interest in social justice, equity, anti-capitalism, and the appropriate role of socialism in this world, lessons from the 20th century abound, should one bother to look. This is one of them. Lin Zhao was born in China in 1932, and joined the underground CCP (China Communist Party) as a teenager. Before the CCP took power, she ran away from home to attend a school of journalism run by the CCP. Ardently devoted to social justice, equity, anti-capitalism, and socialism, she worked tirelessly for the CCP and the people of China, but gradually became disillusioned with it as she saw the unmistakable results: starvation, imprisonment, torture, and execution for millions of the very people whom she so passionately cared about. From her various prison cells, she became a fierce critic of the CCP and Mao Zedong, tirelessly writing plays, poems, letters, and editorials, of which 500,000 characters of her writing are still preserved. *When she ran out of ink, she would write in her own blood; when she ran out of paper, she would write on walls, clothing, wood, or anything else she could use.* A sobering and inspiring story of true courage, well-suited for an age when people can make millions of dollars for pretending to have courage when in truth no personal sacrifice is required of them. Also an important lesson about the frequent disconnect between intentions and ideals, and the actual results of policies designed to implement those ideals.

Or choose another book relevant to business and/or ethics, and ask Prof. Cerling for approval in advance.

ONE-ON-ONE WRITING CONFERENCES

I hope to meet with each of you at least once during the semester to discuss your writing and progress in the class. Some class time will be used for these meetings; however, it will likely also be necessary to schedule meetings with me outside of regularly scheduled class time.

Prerequisites and/or Recommended Preparation

The prerequisite is WRIT 140/150 or its equivalent. No prior knowledge of business is expected or required in this course. However, it is assumed that students' skills in grammar and reading are sufficient to enable them to read and write college-level prose. Students in need of remedial work in English grammar or reading comprehension are advised to drop this course and seek additional help before enrolling in 340.

Course Notes

This course is a “hybrid” course, and uses a reading-writing-discussion-workshop format. Brief readings will be done during class time and written about and discussed. Although this class is scheduled to meet twice a week, one “meeting time” will be replaced on many weeks with either a structured writing assignment and peer assessment related to the book you are reading, a one-on-one consultation session with Prof. Cerling, or a meeting with your Team to work on a Team Project. Students are required to read a single book of their choosing outside of class, and submit summaries of their readings by midnight each Wednesday for ten weeks. Each student will also make one brief (approximately 5 minutes) in-class presentation with another student on the main class textbook, *Style*. Some class sessions will be devoted to meetings with Prof. Cerling about the Team Project, and students will also spend a considerable amount of time doing in-class journaling or written experimentation.

Contract Grading

This course uses a “contract grading” system. [See Grading Policies section below for more details.] The contract is this: a student with Passing grades on the three major writing assignments and the Portfolio will receive a grade of C for the class. A student may earn a “B” for the class by completing the requirements for a C, and also receiving a grade of P on each of five P/NP assignments. Grades of B+, A-, and A are reserved for those whose final portfolio attains those grades, and who satisfactorily completes the other assignments. A grade of NP on a P/NP assignment will lower the final grade by .33 (i.e., a grade of B would be lowered to a B- if a student has four Passes and 1 No Pass).

Introduction to Peerceptiv Individual Assessment:

This course will make use of Peerceptiv. ***Students must purchase a subscription.***

Peerceptiv is a peer assessment tool that allows you to give and receive feedback on class assignments. It will help you to better understand your course material and how to improve in future assignments. You are graded on how accurately you rate others' submissions and how helpful your comments are, in addition to the quality of work on your own assignment. This system has been validated to provide reliable grades over a dozen years of research.

A Peerceptiv assignment involves three steps: uploading a submission, reviewing your peers' submissions, and providing feedback on the reviews you received. The reviewing process is anonymous and double-blind, meaning that you won't know whose product you are reviewing or who is reviewing your work.

Marshall Learning Environment: Open Expression and Respect for All

Open Expression and Respect for All. An important goal of the educational experience at USC Marshall is to be exposed to and discuss diverse, thought-provoking, and sometimes controversial ideas that challenge

one's beliefs. This is an important part of the training business students must receive to address and solve major issues that confront businesses in a critical and thoughtful manner.

The USC Marshall School of Business shares the University's **Unifying Values**:

- We act with integrity in the pursuit of excellence.
- We embrace diversity, equity and inclusion to promote well-being.
- We engage in open communication and are accountable for living our values.

We value each person's humanity and voice and strive to ensure that every member of our community feels that they belong and are respected.

We support the **USC Statement** (reprinted below) protecting free speech and the academic freedom of faculty and students. Certain limited categories of speech are not protected by the law, such as expression that is defamatory, incites violence, constitutes a true threat or unlawful harassment, or violates privacy, confidentiality, or intellectual property rights. But other than the limited categories of legally unprotected speech, we are committed to fostering a learning environment where free inquiry and expression are encouraged and celebrated and for which all members of the Marshall community share responsibility. We recognize that speech that is deeply offensive may nevertheless be legally protected and seek to restrain ourselves from responding with censorship or reprisal.

The classroom is an environment in which students and faculty should not feel they will be punished, ostracized, or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, or concerns, or for making mistakes. As part of the educational process, students and faculty will discuss topics that may make some people uncomfortable, unhappy, distressed, or even offended. Sometimes there will be strong disagreements about these topics, and the care with which they are discussed is paramount. It is the shared responsibility of members of our community: to treat each other with courtesy, dignity and respect; to appreciate the spectrum of viewpoints on an issue; and, to be actively involved in working through contentious issues together.

USC Statement on Free Speech

Published December 18, 2017

USC has long had established policies protecting the free speech rights and academic freedom of faculty and students.

In both policy and practice, when USC faculty speak or write as citizens, they are free of institutional censorship or discipline. And academic freedom at USC protects all faculty. We vigorously defend these principles for faculty of every status and type of appointment.

Dissent — disagreement, a difference of opinion, or thinking differently from others — is an integral aspect of expression in higher education, whether it manifests itself in a new and differing theory in quantum mechanics, a personal disagreement with a current foreign policy, opposition to a position taken by the university itself, or by some other means. The university is a diverse community based on free exchange of ideas and devoted to the use of reason and thought in the resolution of differences.

As the Faculty declares, the recognizes students are

Handbook University that exposed

to thought-provoking ideas as part of their educational experience, and some of these ideas may challenge their beliefs and may lead a student to claim that an educational experience is offensive. Therefore any such issues that arise in the educational context will be considered in keeping with the University's commitment to academic freedom.

Our Board of Trustees long ago declared that members of our academic community share the purpose of the humane and critical examination of major issues of social, political, economic, ethical and aesthetic importance which have in the past confronted, and which will in the coming years constantly confront, the society as a whole. The Trustees also recognized the responsibility of members of our community to understand the spectrum of viewpoints on an issue, and, equally, to be actively involved in the solution of the problems these issues delineate. For these reasons, our Trustees mandated that students and student organizations shall be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them and to express opinions publicly and privately.

Our longstanding policies also declare that the University of Southern California is committed to fostering a learning environment where free inquiry and expression are encouraged and celebrated and for which all its members share responsibility. Dissent — disagreement, a difference of opinion, or thinking differently from others — is an integral aspect of expression in higher education, whether it manifests itself in a new and differing theory in quantum mechanics, a personal disagreement with a current foreign policy, opposition to a position taken by the university itself, or by some other means. The university is a diverse community based on free exchange of ideas and devoted to the use of reason and thought in the resolution of differences. The university recognizes the crucial importance of preserving First Amendment rights and maintaining open communication and dialogue in the process of identifying and resolving problems which arise in the dynamics of life in a university community.

The legitimate expression of differing opinions and concerns, including unpopular, controversial or dissident viewpoints, is an essential element of the academic process. The imposition of opinions and concerns upon those who in turn dissent from them is not to be condoned and is inconsistent with a university's process and function. Students and student organizations are free to support causes by all orderly means which do not disrupt or substantially interfere with university activities, as such disruption or interference violates the responsible exercise of free inquiry and expression. All members of the university community have a responsibility to provide and maintain an atmosphere of free inquiry and expression respecting the fundamental human rights of others, the rights of others based upon the nature of the educational process and the rights of the institution.

Grading Policies

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
WRITING		
<u>Formal Papers</u>		
*PAPER #1 – Research	P/NP	—
*PAPER #2 – Critical Thinking	P/NP	—
*PAPER #3 – Business Ethics (book review)	P/NP	—
FINAL PORTFOLIO (revision of 2 of 3 papers)	1000	100%
<u>In-Class Presentation</u>		
Williams Presentation (2-person)	P/NP	—
<u>Professionalism</u>		
<u>Group Writing Project</u>		
Group Presentation - <i>Figures of Speech in Advertising</i>	P/NP	—
<u>Other Course-Related Writing</u>		
1. Reflections Journal (minimum of 25 entries) (Note: Maximum of 3 entries will count toward final journal total in any given week. Weeks end on Saturday at midnight.)	P/NP	—
	P/NP	—
2. Weekly Reading Summaries (10 summaries)	P/NP	—
3. Quizzes over Williams readings (5 quizzes)	P/NP	—
<p>*Notes: 1. All three major writing assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the class.</p> <p>2. All other assignments are P/NP except the final portfolio, which is the anchor score for the course and will normally determine the final grade. Grades of “NP” on any of the P/NP assignments will typically lower the final course grade by .33 (that is, a “B” could be lowered to “B-”).</p>		
<p>Also note: Successful grades of “P” on all assignments plus submission of a Passing Portfolio will result in a Course Grade no lower than a B.</p>		
TOTAL	1000	100.0%

EVALUATION OF YOUR WORK

My goal in every class is to provide every student with the highest grade for the course that I can justify as a professional. It is also my goal that 100% of my students agree that their final grades are a fair representation of the quality of their best work in the class. It disappoints me if I am unable to accomplish my second goal; but I can pledge to all of my students that I will always accomplish the first.

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. If, however, you feel that an error has occurred in the grading of any assignment, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can re-evaluate your work if necessary. As best as you can, please explain to me fully and carefully what you think the problem is, and why you think the assignment should be re-graded. If you are at all persuasive, I will re-read the assignment. Do be aware, however, that while your grade may go up or remain unchanged, it is also possible that I will see significant problems that I missed initially, and assign a lower grade upon carefully re-reading your work.

NOTE: Please know that my evaluation of your work as a writer has nothing to do with whether I like you or not, or whether I agree with you or not. I have often given A's to students whose views I strongly disagreed with, and C's to students whose views I strongly agreed with. My key questions in evaluating your work are simply: how well developed is the argument? How strong is the writing?

Bottom line: my assessment of your writing has nothing to do with whether I like you or agree with you. Instead, my assessment represents my best professional judgment as to how well you are able to use writing to accomplish the purpose of the assignments.

GRADING RATIONALE AND FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

A truly "advanced" writer is a person who is able, regardless of audience, genre, purpose, or other constraints, to consistently show mastery of three aspects of language—grammar, rhetoric, and logic—by adapting them effectively to the needs presented by the situation at hand. All terms used to evaluate writing--such as diction, organization, argument, format, correctness, clarity, cohesion, or cogency--ultimately refer to one or more of these three aspects of language. Weakness in any one of these three areas will necessarily weaken the writing overall. Consequently, final evaluation of students' final papers will always take into account all three of these aspects of their writing.

At this level of instruction, at this University, "A" level writing represents writing that is difficult to distinguish from professional or graduate student-level writing. It is writing that demonstrates awareness of the typically wide range of research and scholarly opinion on a given topic; provides strong justification for the significance of the topic under consideration; anticipates and successfully rebuts obvious objections to the author's line of thought; provides thorough, well-chosen support for a demonstrably important thesis; and accomplishes all of these things with demonstrably advanced skills in grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

Every attempt is made in this class to make the evaluation of students' writing as objective as possible. Grading rubrics will be made available with each assignment. These rubrics attempt to identify and objectify the elements of grammar, rhetoric, and logic that will play an especially important role in this course, and in a given paper.

Using the criteria on the rubric, I will award a “ghost” score for each paper turned in within two weeks of the deadline for the paper. That score represents the grade, on a scale of 1-100, that a student would be likely to get on that paper if turned in unedited in a final portfolio. Only final portfolio grades are used for the final grade in the class, however, together with the student’s record on P/NP assignments. (See sections above entitled “Grading Policies” and “Contract Grading”).

Historically, the average grade for this class is between a (B) and (B+).

GRADING CRITERIA

The evaluation and grading criteria used in this course are designed to faithfully reflect the University-wide expectations for WRI 340. [See Grading Rubrics, available separately.] Accordingly, graded written assignments will be evaluated with respect to the following criteria (but note that these are categorized somewhat differently in different rubrics):

Cogency (rhetoric & logic): The rhetorical power, or persuasiveness, of the paper, both overall and in its particular assertions.

Support (rhetoric & logic): The extent to which the paper’s assertions are supported with examples, evidence, or reasoning which are appropriate to the topic and audience, and which strongly advance the argument of the paper.

Control (rhetoric): The organizational quality of the paper, including the following: effective use of titles, headings, bullets, fonts, bold print, and other typographical devices; appropriate and effective introductions and previews; well-defined and well-developed body structure; effective, appropriate, and balanced conclusions; appropriate transitions between sentences and paragraphs; effective use of organizational devices in sentences and paragraphs.

Topicality (rhetoric): The degree and extent to which the paper explores the issue(s) and conforms to the explicit guidelines set forth in the assignment, addressing all aspects of the writing task.

Style (rhetoric): The appropriateness of the paper’s diction—including sentence structure, word choice, fluency, and tone in terms of its purpose and intended audience.

Grammar and Mechanics (grammar): The quality of the paper at the surface level: syntax, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Assignment Submission Policy

NO points will be deducted for late submission of any of the three major papers.

However, note the following:

All major papers have 3 possible deadlines:

1. Submissions received by the first due date will receive **both** written feedback **and** a projected rubric score. [Possible exception: to provide timely feedback to everyone, it is possible that paper A3 may receive *only* rubric scores when submitted on time]
2. Submissions received 7 days or less after the original due date will receive **only** a rubric score.
3. Submissions received more than 7 days after the original due date, but before the final class session, will receive **only** a projected score (no rubric attached).
4. Submissions received after the final class period will receive an “F” for the paper and for the class.

PROFESSIONALISM: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This class is intended to imitate a business environment in some important particulars, one of which is professionalism—in conduct, communication, and quality of work. Therefore, students are expected to attend class on time, come to class prepared, and cheerfully, thoughtfully, and constructively contribute to all in-class activities.

Should this class need to be conducted in whole or in part via Zoom sessions, it should be remembered that this is still a professional setting, and professional behavior is still expected. That means that, apart from some extenuating circumstances, students should have their cameras on at all times, with appropriate background visuals—either live or virtual. Take care to present yourself, always, as you would if you knew that your next employer or client were sitting in the session—because they very well might be! This excludes, among other backdrops, sitting in bed.

All forms of **unprofessional conduct**, and especially behavior that is disrespectful of other persons, including me, is prohibited, and will negatively affect a student’s chances of success in the class. Unprofessional conduct can be reduced to three general categories: various forms of inattention, incivility, or bad faith. **Inattention** includes all forms of electronic distraction by phones, email, and the Internet; **incivility** includes all forms of disrespectful behavior, including verbal denigration of others, interruptions, or late arrival to or early exit from class; **bad faith** includes all forms of cheating, especially plagiarism, the consequences for which are severe and discussed separately below.

The consequences of these misbehaviors range from verbal reprimands to lowered grades. Students who persist in inappropriate behaviors will be invited to leave the classroom and may even be asked to withdraw from the course. In severe cases, such as plagiarism, offenses can result in failure for a paper, failure for the course, or even expulsion from the University. Also note: electronic devices, such as phones, laptops, etc., are often problematic in professional settings. At the request of the instructor, any such electronic device should be turned off immediately. [Important note: given the novelty of AI writing tools, no universally-agreed upon guidelines for avoiding plagiarism when making use of AI writing tools have been created. But this principle will doubtless apply: always give credit in some way to indicate any sources you make use of for informational content, key concepts, or phrasing that is not your own. Also see AI policies, noted in a separate section below.]

Attendance, punctuality and participation. An expected mode of professional business behavior is punctual attendance at all meetings. Punctual attendance, and good participation, is a form of communicating professionalism, courtesy to others, and respect for the task at hand. Nevertheless, regular attendance and robust participation in the class is expected.

Note: All students are required to have their cameras on during Zoom sessions, unless prior arrangements are made with the professor. Class is meant to create a professional, business-like environment, and professionalism typically requires having one’s camera on in professional settings. Ignoring this request will result in a grade of NP on the Professionalism portion of the class.

You will be graded on your actual participation in class, not on your attendance. The highest participation grades will be reserved for those who consistently contribute positively to the atmosphere and learning objectives of this class, both with respect to their daily attitudes, and with respect to the substance and frequency of their contributions. But frequency of contributions is less important than the content and quality of those contributions. At the same time, students who participate only rarely, or only when prompted, or whose contributions may be off-topic or show unfamiliarity with the assigned readings, will not receive full credit for participation in this class. The highest grades will be awarded to those whose presence regularly and positively advanced the purposes of the class; the lowest to those whose presence was either negligible or, worse, counter-productive to the class.

AI policy: AI usage encouraged

I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.

AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. ***Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.***

Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.

Please ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an “F” grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.

In this course, AI use is prohibited only on two assignments: the weekly writing journals; and the weekly book summaries. Students identified as using AI on either of those two assignments will be assigned a grade of NP for it.

Other requirements

- Word-processing software (a relatively recent version of Microsoft Word is standard)
- Access to the Internet

Retention of Graded Coursework

All graded work which affects the course grade will be retained for one year after the end of the course if the graded work has not been returned to the student (i.e., if I returned a graded paper to you, it is your responsibility to file it, not mine).

Technology Policy [except for the last sentence, the following applies only to in-person classes]

Laptop and Internet usage should be considered inappropriate except when explicitly permitted by the professor. Use of other personal communication devices, such as cell phones, is considered unprofessional and is not permitted during academic or professional sessions. ANY e-devices must be completely turned off during class time. Upon request, you must comply and put your device on the table in off mode and FACE DOWN. You might also be asked to deposit your devices in a designated area in the classroom.

Videotaping faculty lectures is not permitted due to copyright and privacy infringement regulations.

Audiotaping may be permitted if approved by the professor. Use of any recorded or distributed material is reserved exclusively for the USC students registered in this class.

Course Calendar

See Appendix II below.

Statement on Academic Conduct

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Statement on Academic Support Systems

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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

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

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

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

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) 740-2500

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 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) 740-0411

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

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

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) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

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

Incomplete Grades

A mark of IN (incomplete) may be assigned when work is not completed because of a documented illness or other “emergency” that occurs after the 12th week of the semester (or the twelfth week equivalent for any course that is scheduled for less than 15 weeks).

An “emergency” is defined as a serious documented illness, or an unforeseen situation that is beyond the student’s control, that prevents a student from completing the semester. Prior to the 12th week, the student still has the option of dropping the class. Arrangements for completing an IN must be initiated by the student and agreed to by the instructor prior to the final examination. If an Incomplete is assigned as the student’s grade, the instructor is required to fill out an “**Assignment of an Incomplete (IN) and Requirements for Completion**” form which specifies to the student and to the department the work remaining to be done, the procedures for its completion, the grade in the course to date, and the weight to be assigned to work remaining to be done when the final grade is computed. Both the instructor and student must sign the form with a copy of the form filed in the department. Class work to complete the course must be completed within one calendar year from the date the IN was assigned. The IN mark will be converted to an F grade should the course not be completed within the time allowed.

Grade Disputes

All grades assigned by faculty members are final. Students have the right to seek explanation, guidance, counsel and reasons for the assignment of a grade. Faculty may initiate a change in grade if there is an error in the calculation of a grade. Students may appeal a grade according to university policy as set forth in *SCampus*. A faculty member may not change a disputed grade outside the formal appeals process. In response to a disputed academic evaluation by an instructor, a student is entitled to two levels of appeal after review by the instructor: first to the chairperson of the department and then to the appropriate dean of the school. The full university policy can be found in *SCampus* under University Governance / Academic Policies at <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>.

Appendix I



APPENDIX Alignment of Course Learning Objectives with Marshall’s Six Undergraduate Program Learning Goals			
Goal	Marshall Program Learning Goal Description Covered in this Course (Goals 3, 5, 6 and relevant selected sub-goals)	Emphasis/ Relation to Course Objectives	Relevant Course Topics
3	<p>Our graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills <i>so as to become future-oriented decision makers, problem solvers and innovators.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>3.1 Students will understand the concepts of critical thinking, entrepreneurial thinking and creative thinking as drivers of innovative ideas (not explicit for this course).</p> <p>3.2 Critically analyze concepts, theories and processes by stating them in their own words, understanding key components, identifying assumptions, indicating how they are similar to and different from others and translating them to the real world.</p> <p>3.3 Be effective at gathering, storing, and using qualitative and quantitative data and at using analytical tools and frameworks to understand and solve business problems.</p> <p>3.4 Demonstrate the ability to anticipate, identify and solve business problems. They will be able to identify and assess central problems, identify and evaluate potential solutions, and translate a chosen solution to an implementation plan that considers future contingencies.</p>	High (Course learning objectives 1-10)	<p>All course assignments require critical thinking skills (students will utilize the USC-CT approach as a framework for critical analysis)</p>
5	<p>Our graduates will demonstrate ethical reasoning skills, understand social, civic, and professional responsibilities <i>and aspire to add value to society.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>5.1 Understand professional codes of conduct.</p> <p>5.2 Recognize ethical challenges in business situations and assess appropriate courses of action.</p>	Moderate (Course learning objectives 7, 8)	<p>Discussion of business ethics, review of codes of conduct, and CSR, ethics mini-case exercises</p>

6	<p>Our graduates will be effective communicators <i>to facilitate information flow in organizational, social, and intercultural contexts.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>6.1 Identify and assess diverse personal and organizational communication goals and audience information needs.</p> <p>6.2 Understand individual and group communications patterns and dynamics in organizations and other professional contexts.</p> <p>6.3 Demonstrate an ability to gather and disseminate information and communicate it clearly, logically, and persuasively in professional contexts.</p>	<p>High (Course learning objectives 1-10)</p>	<p>All assignments require audience and purpose analysis, and tailoring communication messages accordingly.</p>
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<p>Marshall Undergraduate Program Goals <u>not Explicitly</u> Covered by this Course (Goals 1, 2, 4)</p>

1	<p>Our graduates will understand types of markets and key business areas and their interaction <i>to effectively manage different types of enterprises.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>1.1 Demonstrate foundational knowledge of core business disciplines, including business analytics and business economics.</p> <p>1.2 Understand the interrelationships between functional areas of business so as to develop a general perspective on business management.</p> <p>1.3 Apply theories, models, and frameworks to analyze relevant markets (e.g. product, capital, commodity, factor and labor markets).</p> <p>1.4 Show the ability to utilize technologies (e.g., spreadsheets, databases, software) relevant to contemporary business practices.</p>
2	<p>Our graduates will develop a global business perspective. They will understand how local, regional, and international markets, and economic, social and cultural issues impact business decisions <i>so as to anticipate new opportunities in any marketplace.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>2.1 Understand how local, regional and global markets interact and are impacted by economic, social and cultural factors.</p> <p>2.2 Understand that stakeholders, stakeholder interests, business environments (legal, regulatory, competitor) and business practices vary across regions of the world.</p>
4	<p>Our graduates will develop people and leadership skills to promote their effectiveness as <i>business managers and leaders.</i> Specifically, students will:</p> <p>4.1 Recognize, understand, and analyze the motivations and behaviors of stakeholders inside and outside organizations (e.g., teams, departments, consumers, investors, auditors).</p> <p>4.2 Recognize, understand and analyze the roles, responsibilities and behaviors of effective managers and leaders in diverse business contexts e.g., marketing, finance, accounting.</p> <p>4.3 Understand factors that contribute to effective teamwork.</p>

Appendix II

WRIT 340: Course Schedule – Fall 2024

Please note the following:

1. **In-class journal entries** are due at the end of the class day that they are assigned. In addition, students should each week add at least one journal entry on their own on a topic of their own choosing. These additional journal entries can be related to coursework, current events, personal reflections, or anything else the student wishes. ***A total of at least 25 journal entries is expected to get a Pass for this aspect of the course; again, these should be done weekly, rather than primarily at the end of the course, so as to build up a habit of regular writing. Therefore, no more than 3 entries will be counted toward the semester total of 25 in any given week. Weeks end on Saturday at midnight.***
2. **Individual chapter summaries** are due each week on Wednesday night at midnight PST as stated in the Course Calendar, while Peerceptiv reviews are due Thursdays at midnight.
3. **Quizzes** over Williams will be due by the beginning of the Tuesday class following the in-class presentation on the chapter. Students are expected to make a good-faith effort to do these well; more than one missed or late quiz submission will result in an “F” for this portion of the course. *Note that students are allowed and encouraged to collaborate on quizzes.*
4. **Presentations on Williams** must be made on the date assigned. Students are encouraged to record their presentations in advance and email them to Prof. Cerling if they are unable to be present on their assigned day.
5. Note that, apart from the first two Thursdays of the semester, we will not meet in-person or on Zoom on Thursdays. Instead, asynchronous work will be assigned as indicated in the course calendar below. Throughout the semester, **I will be available on Thursdays for individual student conferences**, so long as you sign up 24 hours in advance.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday	Topics	Course Objectives
1	8/27 Introduction + Course Overview	8/29 Course Emphases and Themes: “Words Matter” Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic as the Heart of Liberal Arts Business Communication Assign: A1	<i>Introduction Grammar, Rhetoric, & Logic</i> <i>Professionalism I: Format & Tone (Smola memo)</i>	1-6

2	<p>9/3 “Word Matters: Communication and Innovation”</p> <p><i>Tone & Plain English</i> (Smola letter, cont.) <i>Plain English Handbook</i> Assign: Book reading project</p>	<p>9/5 As Good as Your Word: Confucius, Jesus and Buddha on Right Speech</p> <p>(Cerner memo)</p>	<p><i>Professionalism II: Tone</i> <i>Plain English</i> (Cerner memo)</p>	1-6
3	<p>9/10 Objectivity, Terrorists & Newspapers</p> <p>Presentation: Williams 8 – Concision</p> <p><i>On the Rhetoric of Objectivity</i></p>	<p>9/12 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #1 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Rhetorical Figures & Advertising</i></p> <p>----</p>	8-10
4	<p>9/17 Presentation: Williams 2 – Actions</p> <p>Due: Quiz on Williams 8</p>	<p>9/19 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #2 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Naming & Definition</i></p> <p><i>Critical Thinking: Objectivity & Bias</i></p> <p>—</p> <p><i>Editing for Conciseness</i></p>	1-6
5	<p>9/24 Presentation: Williams 3 – Characters</p> <p>Due: A1 Final Assign: A2 <i>Introduction to Critical Thinking</i> Due: Quiz on Williams 2</p>	<p>9/26 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #3 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday</p>	<p><i>How to Write Clear Sentences: Avoiding Nominalizations</i></p> <p><i>Considering Writing Audiences (i.e., Likely Readers)</i></p>	1-6 7, 10

		Midnight		
6	<p style="text-align: center;">10/1 Presentation: Williams 4 – Cohesion & Coherence Critical Thinking II Due: Quiz on Williams 3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">10/3 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #4 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>How to Write Clear Sentences: Characters as Subjects</i></p>	1-6
7	<p style="text-align: center;">10/8 Presentation: Williams 5 — Emphasis Assign: Team Project Due: Quiz on Williams 4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">10/10 Note: University Fall Break holiday; no readings due this week</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>How to Write Clear Paragraphs</i></p>	1-6
8	<p style="text-align: center;">10/15 Team Project — Zoom sessions with your Team; no corporate class meeting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">10/17 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #5 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>How to Achieve Emphasis in Sentences and Paragraphs</i></p>	1-6

9	<p>10/22 Presentations: (1) Williams 6 – Framing Documents [Note: Entitled “Motivation” in earlier editions] (2) Williams 7 — Framing Sections [Note: Entitled “Global Coherence” in earlier editions] Due: A2 Final Assign/Discuss: A3 <i>Introduction to Business Ethics</i> Due: Quiz on Williams 5</p>	<p>10/24 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: <i>Book Summary #6</i> <i>Submit on Peerceptiv</i> <i>Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday;</i> REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Audience: Contextualization, Framing, & Organization</i></p>	1-6
10	<p>10/29 Presentation: Williams 9 — Shape <i>Business Ethics II</i></p>	<p>10/31 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: <i>Book Summary #7</i> <i>Submit on Peerceptiv</i> <i>Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday;</i> REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Rhetorical Figures & Advertising</i></p>	7-10
11	<p>11/5 Presentation: Williams 10 – Elegance <i>Business & Propaganda I</i></p>	<p>11/7 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: <i>Book Summary #8</i> <i>Submit on Peerceptiv</i> <i>Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday;</i> REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Business Ethics</i> <i>How to Gracefully Lengthen Sentences</i></p>	1-6

12	<p style="text-align: center;">11/12 Team Project — Zoom sessions with your Team; no corporate class meeting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">11/14 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #9 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>How to Manage Complexity in Sentences</i></p>	1-6
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13	<p>11/19 Williams 11 – Ethics of Clarity <i>Class Wrap Up – Semester Review</i></p> <p>Due: A3 Final Draft</p>	<p>11/21 [Asynchronous Work - No Class Meeting] Challenge Thursdays: Book Summary #10 Submit on Peerceptiv Due MIDNIGHT on Wednesday; REVIEWS Due Thursday Midnight; EVALUATIONS Due Friday Midnight</p>	<p><i>Communication Ethics</i></p>	<p>1-6 7, 10</p>
14	<p>11/26 Individual Conferences</p>	<p>11/28 No Class - Thanksgiving</p>		<p>7-10</p>
15	<p>12/3 Team Presentations</p>	<p>12/5 Individual conferences</p>	<p><i>Rhetorical Figures & Advertising</i> <i>Summing Up</i></p>	<p>7-10</p>
16	<p>12/10 Due: Portfolio No Class – Finals Week</p>	<p>12/12 No Class – Finals Week</p>		<p>1-10</p>