

## Intersections in the Natural Sciences

### Advanced College Writing: Spring 2025

**WRIT 340 65105** M/W/F 10 -10:50 am – GFS 217

**WRIT 340 65150** M/W/F 11 -11:50 am – GFS 105

**WRIT 340 65275** M/W/F 1 -1:50 pm – GFS 105

#### Important Links:

Section 105 [10 AM Miro Board](#)

Section 150 [11 AM Miro Board](#)

Section 275 [1 PM Miro Board](#)

All in-class materials and collaborative work is collected on **Miro**.

Homework must be **submitted on Brightspace** on time and complete to receive full credit.

Late or incomplete work receives half credit, per the grading contract.

#### Professor Maddox K. Pennington

*(he/him or they/them)*

Cherokee Nation

[Maddox.Pennington@usc.edu](mailto:Maddox.Pennington@usc.edu)

Office: JEF 102F

#### Student Office Hours: [Appointments](#)

M/W: 2 - 4 pm, after class (Zoom or in Person)

Tuesdays: 11 am - 5 pm (Zoom only)

**Note:** Appointments **must be scheduled 24 hours in advance**, so I can plan ahead. If you cannot find an appointment during scheduled hours, send me an email with three alternate dates/times.

WRIT 340 is intended to augment the skills you began acquiring in WRIT 150 and elsewhere, with an emphasis on the **professional, public** and **academic** audiences you may encounter in your future careers and writing lives. You're encouraged to make each assignment your own.

The structure of this class moves from less to more complex rhetorical situation. We begin with a single text response essay to a student selection from a recent [Best American Science and Nature Writing](#) essay collection. Then we tackle a conversation-driven review of media that features representation of your chosen field. Next we'll explore longer form research topics of your choice. Finally, to create a portfolio, you'll undertake different forms of revision and rework one of your previous pieces in a new form entirely.

If you'd like to use this class as an opportunity to deeply dive into topics your major doesn't have room for, that's great. If you'd like to travel further afield and get creative in your topic choices or get a break from the focus of your major, that's great too. In general, the answer to "Can I..." will be yes.

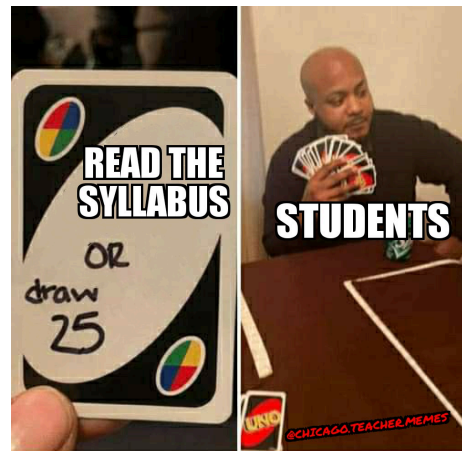
Course Structure		
<b>Assignment 1</b> Due Feb 2	Single Text Response Essay (3-4 pages)	1A Intro Letter 1B Select a Text 1C 3 ICE Moments for Rhetorical Analysis 1D Process Writing <b>WP 1 Draft</b> 1E Conference reflection
<b>Assignment 2</b> Due March 9	Researched Review (5-7 pages)	2A Pitch 3 Exhibits 2B Working Bibliography 2C Outline 2D Workshop Draft 2E Workshop Feedback <b>WP 2 Draft</b> 2F Conference reflection
<b>Assignment 3</b> Due April 20	Research Essay (6-10 pages)	3A Pitch 3 Topics 3B Literature Review 3C Workshop Draft 3D Workshop Feedback <b>WP 3 Draft</b> 3E Conference Reflection
<b>Assignment 4</b> Due April 29	A Practical Revision (1-2 pages)	4A Pitch <b>WP 4 Draft</b>
<b>Final Portfolio:</b> Due TBD		Two Revised Assignments Process Reflection (2-3 pgs)

## 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:

M/W: 2 - 4 pm, after class (Zoom or in Person)

Tuesdays: 11 am - 5 pm (Zoom only)

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 AI<sup>1</sup>

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 paper<sup>2</sup>; 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.

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

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

## Fostering an Anti-Racist Classroom<sup>3</sup>

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 340 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.

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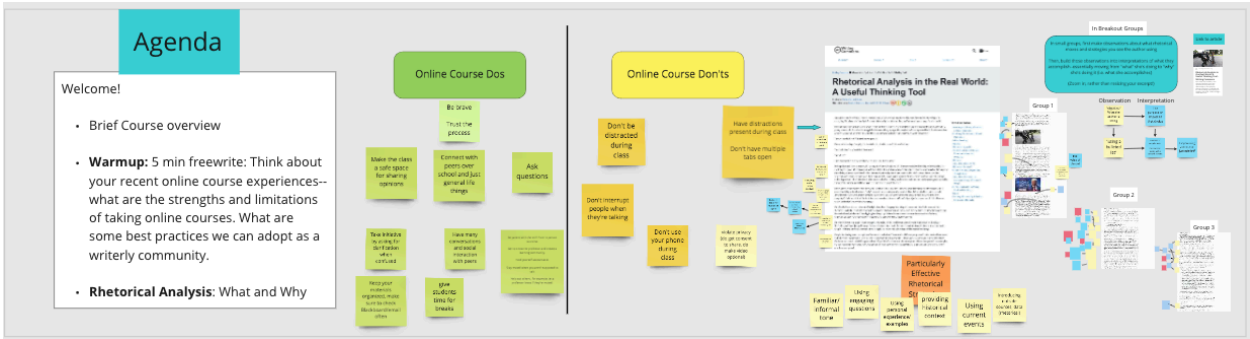
<sup>3</sup> adapted from work by Chris Belcher, July 2020

# IN CLASS TOOLS: Miro

Miro is a virtual interactive whiteboard where assignments and in-class work is 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



# Course Files and Submitting Assignments

I'll be trying out Brightspace this semester as our primary platform for sharing materials, submitting work, and receiving feedback. Use your USC Google account to access readings and assignments.

All assignments are due by midnight the night before class, unless otherwise indicated.

## 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:

1
Harry Vanderspiegel Pennington WRIT 340-64525 Assignment 1A Introductory Letter 8/28/2024
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 <i>The Greatest Showman</i> 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.”
<b>Works Cited</b>
Pennington, Maddox. Syllabus for Writing 340 “Natural Sciences” Fall 2024, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

## Writing 340 Grading Contract

This class uses a “grading contract” rather than points or letter values. Students are guaranteed a final grade of B+ provided they meet the following terms; a thorough portfolio revision and reflection process can raise your grade to an A- or an A.

**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 four 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).

**See page 12-13 for Portfolio guidelines.**

**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, even if your final essay receives a lower grade.
- If you **earn an A- or A on your final portfolio AND you've met the terms** of the contract, then you receive your portfolio grade 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.

**Note:** you can have up to 2 Absences and 2 late Ancillary Assignments without a penalty, but tardiness and late homework add up. **Always submit late work!**

**About Grade Steps:** A Grade Step is  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade. If you violate the grading contract, those are deducted from your final semester grade. Even if your portfolio receives an A, if you had 4 unexcused absences, your grade is lowered three steps, from an A to an B. Deductions are calculated *cumulatively*.

\*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.

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

## Student Support

**TrojansAlert:** Sign up for these alerts to be notified of emergency situations on campus or in the immediately surrounding area. These texts and emails will notify you of what to do/where to go in the case of an emergency affecting campus, and will provide real-time updates.

**Writing Program main office number:** 213-740-1980

Put the **Office of Public Safety** numbers into your phone

**Emergency:** 213-740-4321

**Non-Emergency:** 213-740-6000

## On-campus 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

**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: Response Essay



Image Generated by Chat GPT.

**Prompt:** a graphic image that represents a student exchanging ideas with a professional writer's essay; (iteration 3: Make them less weird)

*Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.*

– Kenneth Burke,  
[The Philosophy of Literary Form](#), 110-111

Public conversation occurs in many settings, between thinkers at all stages of development. We've all heard uninformed people leap into the fray without the expertise or relevant knowledge to make a meaningful contribution. It's not a great experience. As juniors and seniors, you've invested time and attention to develop your authority as participants in your field. For this response essay, you'll identify a topic of interest and together we'll find a related text for you to respond to. We'll brush up on critical reading strategies and rhetorical tactics, then you'll respond to your selected text in a thesis-driven essay of 3-4 pages.

### Guiding Questions

- *What were your initial reactions to the text?*
- *What changed after you read it critically, thinking about rhetorical choices, audience etc.?*
- *What from your own understanding or experience helped facilitate that change?*
- *How can you invite a reader into this new understanding?*

### Process Steps

- **Select a text** you want to engage with from any edition of *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*. Use USC Library resources to find the full text.
- **Read the text closely** to identify specific moments for rhetorical analysis and your own entry point to the conversation so you can share and respond.
- **Analyze the structure and contents of the essay in order to respond to the writer's argument** using your knowledge and experience
- **Interpret the text** to allow your reader to understand it in a new way.

## Final Portfolio

Supporting our course goals of **process over product**, your final portfolio provides a culminating snapshot of your growth as a thinker and an editor. From your completed Writing Projects, identify one that will most benefit from a thorough revision and one that needs a final small-comb review to earn a B+.

If you'd like to earn an A, substantively revise two major assignments.

B+ = 1 Substantive, 1 Polishing Revision + Letter of reflection on the process

A- = Substantive revisions attempted, but insufficient; missing letter, etc.

A = 2 Substantive revisions + Letter of reflection on the process

If you have not upheld the grading contract, you may receive a B or lower.

**Note:** WP 4 counts as a substantive revision since it is a repurposing of a source or topic in a new form, but you should check in with me before undertaking it.

**Before you begin**, plan out how you will create a visual record of your revision process.

You might turn on "Track Changes" (Word) or "Suggestion Mode" (Google Docs), or also annotate a PDF and submit it along with your clean final draft. You might go through and make changes first, then describe/comment on what type of changes you made using margin comments. Or you might print out a hard copy, mark it up with changes you intend to make, and scan it to accompany your final draft where all these revisions have been incorporated. Either way, you'll need to annotate important revisions (see below). You may need to search out specific exporting/annotating directions based on your browser, software or operating system.

**"Polishing" Revision:** "Polishing" concerns often have to do with clarity, pacing, repetition, word choice, and organization of ideas *within* paragraphs and sentences. **You can resolve comments for self-evident changes like "revised for sense" or "deleted repeated word".** The purpose of your editing should be clear.

**"Substantive" Revision:** "Substantive" revision reflects evidence of rethinking, expansion, precision, further sourcework or updated information, reorganization, and depth of understanding. **You can accept/resolve basic track changes for sentence level fine tuning, but must annotate bigger changes to explain your choices.** For example, tell your reader why you chose to move a paragraph or what you realized during revision that required an additional source, etc.

**Reflection** (2-3 pages) Reflect on the process of preparing, writing, and revising each assignment. What are your major takeaways? In what ways do you feel prepared for future writing in your areas of study or work? What do you still hope to improve?

## **Portfolio =**

- Revised Assignment (Substantive, no track changes left)
- Marked up Draft (revision notes + annotations of significant changes)
- Revised Assignment (Substantive or Polishing)
- Marked up Draft (revision notes + annotations of changes)
- Letter of Reflection (can come first or last)

TITLE YOUR PORTFOLIO: **LAST NAME,FIRSTNAME\_PORTFOLIO**

### **Q: What Goes In Your Final Reflection?**

Here are some questions I'm interested in, but don't feel like you have to answer them all. This is not a check list, but a jumping off point. Feel free to explore or expand upon any aspect of the writing or the course that's on your mind.

Be sure you reflect on the process steps and experience for each major assignment:

- Writing Project 1: Response Essay;
- Writing Project 2: Review;
- Writing Project 3: Research Essay.
- Writing Project 4: A Practical Revision

What prewriting strategies did you find most useful? What was most challenging? What revision tools did you acquire during this class? What tools were you able to adapt from your writing prior to this class? What tools from this class do you think you'll carry forward?

**For each essay you chose to revise** for the portfolio, also talk about your priorities and strategies. What elements were you focused on? What did you notice as you revisited your earlier work? What do you know now that you didn't know before? What was most surprising?

Then move to the big picture: Looking back at your goals from day one, have you accomplished those, or at least made progress? Anything you'd like me to know as I go into your portfolio? Any suggestions or advice for future students taking WRIT 340 for the first time?