Writing 150: TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL CHANGE

Dana Milstein, PhD   E: danamils@usc.edu P:
Office: virtual   (917) 601-5243

General Introduction

Writing 150 is not a psychology class, a philosophy class, or even a cultural studies class, but more a class about how to "do" different types of thinking and then express the product of our thinking through the medium of writing. Writing well is challenging in part because of its intense cognitive demands.

Our course will try to lower those demands in two ways:
> 1. We will use the same step-by-step process for developing our papers, so that we can organize our decision-making to reduce its complexity: we'll decide a few things at a time instead of everything at once.
> 2. We will practice using supportive strategies that 'offload' some of our thought processes onto physical, visual, and emotional activities that are processed by systems in the brain (which are different from those which manipulate verbal information). We will also be asked to explore and decide which of these strategies works best for us individually and collectively.

We will approach this course as a **thought incubator and writing laboratory**…*as a safe space to explore, play, process, and share our ideas collectively*.

Essential to sharing critical insights with the world is learning to write—in a clear, compelling, and effective manner. Indeed, this class marks our entry into a brave new world of writing—that is to say, "real-world" writing, the kind of writing that tackles big issues with depth and originality. That means learning to think critically, not just regurgitate information. It also means breaking free of rigid, "formulaic" writing structures (say goodbye to the 5-paragraph essay!). To that end, we will be introduced to: strategies for **invention**

and **prewriting** (generating and cultivating our ideas); strategies for **arrangement** (articulating and organizing those ideas in writing); some new (and old) ways to improve our writing **style**; and lastly, strategies for **revision** (arguably the most important part of the writing process!). The process of becoming a strong writer and critical thinker will take longer than one semester—for many of us, a lifetime—but consider this class the first step in a journey towards a better understanding of our place in the world as an individual, a citizen, a student, and a future professional.

Our ultimate goals are:

- to produce original writing through formal assignments and ancillary writing designed to deepen our appreciation of writing as an essential process—of thinking, of learning, of remembering, of inquiring, of persuading—within the academic discourse community in particular and global society as a whole
- to appreciate that writing is a process, that results from having generated, considered, and communicated more and more refined ideas
- to cultivate sound rhetorical judgment, which necessitates identifying genuine issues, focusing writing on significant purposes, appreciating the relationship between writers and their audiences, and adapting our writing to the rhetorical situation
- to practice good critical reasoning and ethical inquiry, learning how to navigate—with authority, precision, and creativity—the difficult issues before us

Writing 150 Thematic: TECHNOLOGY

Technology is an all-inclusive term that applies to the systemic production of "stuff" (tools, processes, machines) across disciplines and cultures in human, animal, and plant history. Common axioms such as "technology is ubiquitous" or "fail fast, fail often" fetishize technology and technophiles' race towards "Progress"--an ideology that inevitably motivates technological advances. Nevertheless, important challenges arise with regard

to the ethical and moral implications of technology-as-Progress, including:

- Invention or discovery?
- Patentability: Specific or Universal Application?
- How far is too far?
- Progression, Regression, or Retroactive Innovation?
- Access and engagement? Dependency or co-existence?

We may be intuitively untangling these questions because we have lived and interacted with technology since our conception. So, we will steer clear of the more obvious "light" and "dark" sides, and instead focus on the "far side" of technology--what it teaches us about the condition of "being":
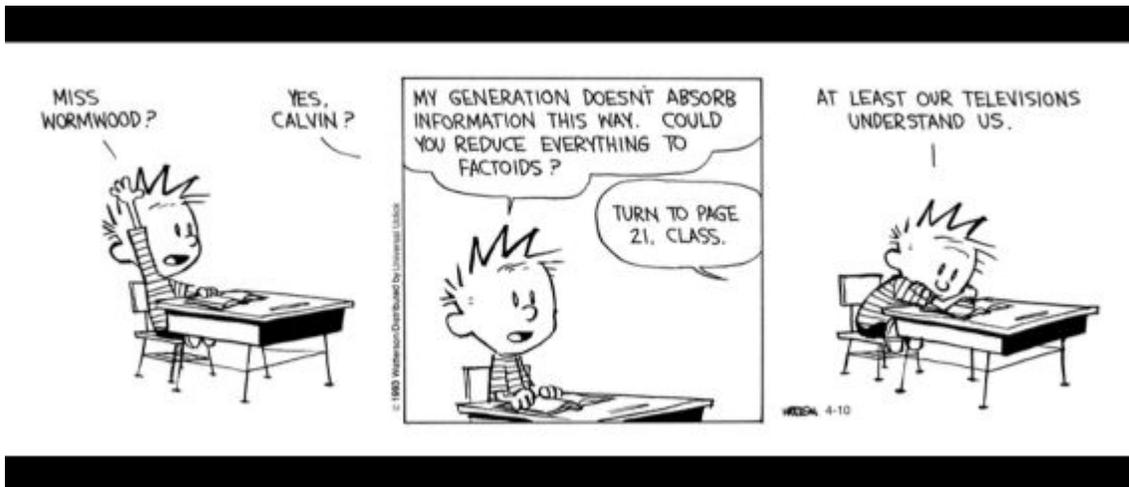
Required Materials

1 package of 5 thin highlighters (5 different colors)
1 pen, 1 pencil, 1 notebook for sketching
1 pack multicolored Post-It Notes
Laptops, tablets, mobile devices permitted (and required often)

Writing Prompts (WPs)

Writing 150 comprises four major writing prompts (WPs). Each is worth progressively more in terms of the final grade. Students will receive a detailed assignment sheet for each Writing Assignment.

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Assignment Requirements	%
Writing Assignment 1 (WP1)	3-4 page essay	10%
Writing Assignment 2 (WP2)	4-6 page essay	15%
Writing Assignment 3 (WP3)	5-7 page essay	20%
Writing Assignment 4 (WP4)	8-12 page essay	25%
Final Portfolio	Revision & Reflections	5%
Ancillary Writings x 10	Lightweight assignments completed in and out of class	20%
Participation	Attendance, class discussion, and in-class activities	5%

Point Distribution Across Papers

	argument & analysis	response to the assignment	evidence	organization	examples	style & tone	mechanics and grammar	TOTAL
ESSAY #1	25%	10%	10%	10%	20%	20%	5%	100%
ESSAY #2	10%	5%	15%	25%	30%	10%	5%	100%
ESSAY #3	15%	5%	30%	20%	20%	5%	5%	100%
ESSAY #4	20%	10%	25%	15%	15%	10%	5%	100%

Department-Wide Grading Scale

The Writing Program uses a different grading scale (based on a four-point, rather than a 100-point, grading scale), which is a little different than the grading scale you are used to (for example, on our scale, a "50" is equivalent to a C letter grade, while a "75" is a B. I have set Blackboard to show only letter grades to avoid confusion; if you see a numeric grade on TurnItIn (the website we use for major writing assignments) that looks very low (for example, if you got a "55" and your instinct

was to think it was a failing grade), check Blackboard's gradebook to see what the actual letter equivalent is.

Department-Wide Grading Standards

Writing 150 is a demanding class, in terms of both the basic workload and the rigor with which that work is evaluated. Teachers in the USC Writing Program apply a consistent grading rubric to all work for the class; this rubric is outlined in our Writing 150 course book. We will discuss it during class as well.

- Note: **Teachers do not give grades; students earn them.** Because the course is built on skill acquisition and improvement, it is expected that most students will initially score as a novice (C-range) and make progress towards A-level writing by the term's end. Assignments are weighted increasingly from 10-25% to reflect this expectation.
- You may inquire about a grade on an assignment, but you must read all of my written feedback first and use the rubrics and other data to indicate any areas of disagreement or error in grading your work. Grades are <u>not negotiable</u> nor will grade grubbing help.

Blackboard

All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard, and all materials needed for the course will also be posted there. I also post regular news/updates and announcements.

Attendance & Participation

Any student who accumulates <u>seven or more absences</u> before the semester Withdraw date should withdraw from Writing 150. Your participation grade is not based on seat warming talents but rather on active, meaningful contributions to our discussions and in-class activities. Students who are shy, socially anxious, or speak English as a second or third language are especially encouraged to make use of our safe space to practice sharing.

Late Work

Late ancillary and in-class assignments are not accepted unless you have a legitimate excuse Legitimate excuses for absences include--but are not limited to--university-sanctioned events (including NCAA participation), documentable serious illnesses, religious holidays, and genuine family emergencies.

- If you anticipate needing an extension, please be proactive and speak with me well before the deadline to find a solution.

Ancillary Writing Assignments

Ancillary Writing: Throughout the semester I will ask you to write brief and informal pieces that will help jumpstart your critical thinking and facilitate your larger writing assignments.

✓+ = exemplary (A-level) work (i.e. you've impressed me).

✓ = sufficient (B-level) work (you completed the assignment satisfactorily)

✓- =insufficient (C-level) work (your analysis was lacking depth or incomplete)

NC=No Credit (you didn't do the assignment/did not do a good enough job to receive credit)

Your total ancillary-writings grade (20% of final grade, or a possible 20 pts out of 100) will later be translated into numeric grades (still using the four-point scale) and included in the gradebook. Throughout the course, you will be asked to report on brief surveys how easy or hard different course activities were. This is partly for your benefit, so you can form a clear impression of what works for you, and partly to collect data about what helps students the most.

Peer Review & Student Conferences

Essential to our course is the idea that writing is a process— something that requires multiple drafts and revision. Throughout the course, we will have four draft revision workshops, or peer review days—one for each major writing assignment. Participation in peer review is mandatory. Participation in peer review

includes not only bringing all required copies of a full and complete draft, but also providing insightful, constructive commentary on the drafts of your peers. We will also schedule four individual conferences of 20 minutes each to privately discuss your work, goals, and any personal questions. Sign-ups for conference times will take place through SignUp Genius.

Final Portfolio

Your final portfolio will consist of Writing Assignment 4 and a 1-2 page reflection on your revision process. Instructions for this will be posted to Blackboard later in the semester. The final portfolio is evaluated and a grade recommended through a blind review process by other faculty members in the Sustainability Thematic. I will explain the committee process and approach to paper review and how this impacts your final grade as we approach the semester's end.

Technical Difficulties?

USC has many computer facilities at your disposal, including a laptop loaner program (go to https://itservices.usc.edu/spaces/computingcenters/ for more information). **Back up your work to multiple locations, including at least one hard drive copy and one cloud (Google, Box, etc.) copy.**

The No-Jerks Policy

Writing 150 has a strict No-Jerks policy. This means that we will personally respect one another in class even when our opinions differ. This means that we will observe the distinction between academic inquiry/knowledge that might make initially us uncomfortable or perplexed, on the one hand, and behavior/language that is uselessly rude, on the other. Intellectual, sometimes passionate disagreements are healthy, but we will not tolerate any disruptive, hateful, or divisive comments related to political affiliation, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, physical appearance, professional-sports loyalty, and so forth. Please contact me immediately if you feel in anyway discriminated against or notice bias or inappropriate activity taking place in our class.

How to Format Your Work for This Class

Submission Format and Naming Conventions: Submit in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Save your paper ONLY as "LastName_AssignmentNumber" (i.e., Milstein_WP4.doc).

Header: Include your header SINGLE-SPACED in the top left of the first page:

Your Name
Dr. Milstein
WRIT 150 & Class time (e.g., WRIT 150 MWF 11:00)
Assignment (e.g., Writing Assignment 1)

Title: Title is centered, just below the header. No extra space after the title. No fancy stuff with the titles (larger fonts, bold, underlining). Just plain text.

Font: Font should be 12 point Times New Roman, or a similar 12-point font. Smaller font papers will be returned ungraded.

Margins: one inch (that is, one inch between text and edge of page on all 4 sides)

Spacing (between lines): double-spaced (2.0). Single spaced papers will be returned ungraded.

Number of Pages: Go by word count, NOT number of pages. Include word count at the bottom of your final page (not including Works Cited or Title page matter.

The Writing Center is Your Friend

Bring the assignment prompt and rubric. They take online appointments and walk-ins (Taper Hall, second floor).
https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Your work must be your own original work. This means that you must document all instances when you directly cite, indirectly paraphrase, borrow, or otherwise utilize someone else's words,

ideas, or sundry intellectual materials while writing your stuff, unless you are dealing with a piece of common knowledge (e.g. Abraham Lincoln was a US president). This includes material from other courses you have taken, such as a professor's lecture or other papers you have written or are currently writing (the latter counts as punishable academic dishonesty).

You are responsible for abiding by the policies regarding academic integrity in the Writing 150 Course Book, the policies regarding Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/), and the Campus Student Guidebook (scampus.usc.edu/1300-academic-integrity-review/).

*These penalties apply whether a paper is wholly or partially plagiarized. In other words, a paper that is 5% plagiarized nonetheless earns a 100% F and cannot be revised.

Resources for USC Students with Disabilities

Students who require special accommodations must register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP (located in STU 301, open 8:30AM–5PM, Monday-Friday). The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Remember, by law you are not required to disclose the nature of your disability. Faculty are provided with a general letter that acknowledges a need and describes the accommodations to be provided.

Resources for Underserved or At-Risk Students

Please talk with me if there are special circumstances you are facing related to financial, familial, mental wellness, or other personal challenges that impact your ability to complete work in our class. I will try my best to find a solution with you to ensure that you receive a fair and appropriate education that is rewarding and helps you to thrive and achieve your goals.