

Academic Writing & Inquiry: Writing about Mass Incarceration

Writing 1000 Winter 2017

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Office: Marston 246
Office Hours: Wed.: 11:30–12:30/Th.: 10–11

Welcome to Writing 1000: Academic Writing and Inquiry. The primary goal of this class is to prepare you to write college-level academic papers as a primer for whatever courses of study you eventually enter. Toward that end, the real subject of this class is your own writing more than it is any of the subjects with which we engage ourselves.

Very few people are ever excited about composition classes—fair enough. They involve a ton of writing over a relatively short time, it’s incredibly hard to get a good grade *and* be lazy in them, and—worst of all—you’re almost always only in one because it fulfills a requirement. I get it. So for honesty upfront: yes, all of those things are true about this class.

But that’s not what this class is about. Instead, this class is aimed at addressing one of the biggest problems with writing in college—or, really, writing anywhere: the problem that different readers have different ideas about what makes for “good writing.” Why is it that by the time we figure out what one teacher (or reader) likes, we move to a different class or different situation with a reader who expects something completely different? Whose idea of “good writing” is the right one, and how many transitions and thesis sentences and conclusions do we have to write before we find the right ones?

With these issues in mind, this class is not about giving you the secret to writing well. That would just give you one other person’s idea of “good writing”: mine. No, this class is about a few, fairly intelligible things:

- Understanding that people read and write in different ways for different situations, and developing strategies for navigating the different situations that you encounter. (This is called *rhetorical knowledge*.)
- Using reading and writing to explore complex issues that don’t invite ready-made opinions and, in the process, to argue for what you think about those issues. (This is called *critical inquiry*.)
- Developing an approach toward reading and writing that allows ideas to be shaped through drafts, revision, re-writing, and careful editing. (This is called *process*.)
- Empowering you to recognize the different rules of writing and the limits of those rules, from one writing situation to another. (This is called *conventions*.)

Of course, you can’t write about nothing, and that’s where the second goal of the class comes in. We’ll be reading and discussing essays about the issue of mass incarceration in the United States. Our readings will to give us something to think about, a thread with which we’ll try to tie all of this writing stuff together. Think of the texts we read, then, as a field of engagement on which we practice our compositional, rhetorical, and literary skills. Be prepared to expand your notions of what constitutes a text, to do strategic and focused writing on subjects which will be sometimes familiar and sometimes bewilderingly foreign, and above all to write bravely, inquisitively, and often.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Greene and Lidinsky, *From Inquiry to Academic Writing with Writers Help 2.0*; Graff, *They Say/I Say*; a WordPress blog dedicated to this class; a heavy-duty folder to keep all materials in; an SPU email account that you check regularly; approx. \$20 for printing, photocopying, ink, fees.

PORTFOLIO (70%)

In this course, you will complete two major assignment sequences, each of which is designed to help you fulfill the course outcomes. Each assignment sequence requires you to complete a variety of shorter assignments, leading up to the major paper. These shorter assignments will each target one or more of the course outcomes at a time, help you practice these outcomes, and allow you to build toward a major paper at the end of each sequence. You will have a chance to revise significantly each of the major papers using feedback generated by your instructor, peer review sessions, and writing conferences.

Toward the end of the course, having completed the two sequences, you will be asked to compile and submit a portfolio of your work along with a portfolio cover letter. The portfolio will include the following: *one* of the two major papers, *two or three* of the shorter assignments, and a cover letter—a self-reflective essay that describes your experience in this class and explains how the selected portfolio demonstrates the four outcomes for the course.

In addition to the materials you select as the basis for your portfolio grade, your portfolio must include all of the sequence-related writing you were assigned in the course (both major papers and all the shorter assignments from both sequences, revised and unrevised). A portfolio that does not include all the above will be considered “Incomplete” and will earn a grade of 0-59. The grade for complete portfolios will be based on the extent to which the pieces you select demonstrate the course outcomes. The portfolio will be worth 70% of your final grade, and will be **due by 12:30 on Wednesday, 15 March**.

GRADING AND EVALUATION RUBRIC

This class treats writing as an ongoing process. Writing can be messy work, and no early draft is ever as strong as it will be after going through the revision process (usually several times). For this reason, none of the papers that you write during the first eight weeks will receive an official grade. For many students, this can be stressful. In order to help mediate that stress, I will use one of the following terms in end comments I write on each draft. While I caution you from misinterpreting these terms as grades, they can help to give you a general sense of how your performance is being evaluated.

- **Outstanding:** *The draft offers a very highly proficient—even memorable—demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course outcome(s), including some appropriate risk taking and/or creativity.*
- **Strong:** *The draft offers a proficient demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course outcome(s), which could be further enhanced with revision.*
- **Good:** *The draft effectively demonstrates the trait(s) associated with the course outcome(s), but less proficiently; could use revision to demonstrate more skillful and nuanced command of trait(s).*

- **Acceptable:** *The draft minimally meets the basic outcome(s) requirement, but the demonstrated trait(s) are not fully realized or well-controlled and would benefit from significant revision.*
- **Inadequate:** *Does not meet the outcome(s) requirement; the trait(s) are not adequately demonstrated and require substantial revision on multiple levels.*

PAPER SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All papers should be presented in a professional manner. Unless otherwise stated, assignments should abide by the following MLA guidelines (these will be the default for many of your other classes, too):

- Microsoft Word files (.doc or .docx); if you use Apple Pages or Google Docs, you will need to export your documents to the Word format.
- 1" margins; note that some versions of Word may default to 1.25" on the side margins and, if so, you will need to change this.
- 12-pt., Times New Roman font.
- Number all pages in the top right-hand **header** (not the body of the paper).
- In the left corner at the top of the first page, include your name, my name, your course section, and the date the paper is due.
- Include a title (and select a title that says something about your paper).
- Length (double-spaced) should be within half a page of the minimum or half a page of the maximum.
- Any paper that includes reference to other sources should include a Works Cited page. Citations should use hanging indents (Ctrl+T in Word) and should be formatted according to MLA style (refer to *From Inquiry to Academic Writing* for citation guidelines).

If you have difficulty formatting your paper according to these guidelines, you can download a correctly-formatted Word template from the course website.

PARTICIPATION, PROFESSIONALISM, AND ENGAGEMENT (30%)

Your participation is a crucial component of the class, and the participation grade that you receive is entirely up to you. I want you to do well in this class, but how well you do depends on your involvement in completing the assignments (both in-class and out of class) in a timely manner, contributing to class discussions, and being a conscientious member of the class community. Your participation grade consists of the following:

- Regular attendance and participation for class activities and discussion (30%)
- Regular and timely completion of Writing Journal Blog (30%)
- Participation in all in-class workshops (15%) **[marked † on calendar]**
- Attendance at two one-on-one conferences with the instructor (15%)
- Timely submission of all work, including drafts that meet the minimum length and formatting requirements (10%)

Beginning with the first week of the quarter, attendance will either be taken by the instructor, or based on participation from weekly small graded learning/assessment opportunities. Your attendance will have an effect on your participation grade (see below) because you cannot actively participate without being present. But participation is not restricted to physical presence; it includes engaged listening as well as speaking. It's hard for me to feel that you're engaged if you spend much of your time staring at a phone or a laptop, so please keep your devices in your bag.

Please feel no need to give a reason for any given absence—I trust your judgment, and I do not wish to arbitrate between legitimate and illegitimate excuses. Only keep in mind that your participation points at the end of the term depend upon your contribution to the class, and you can't contribute if you're not here. Students who expect to miss three or more class sessions are recommended to drop the course.

If you do happen to be absent for class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to ask one of your peers what you missed, to get notes, and to make copies of any assignment sheets. Only after you have talked with your peers first should you come talk to me about *clarifying* points.

ASSIGNMENTS & LATE WORK

Assignments must be turned in to Canvas by the due date. Assignments will not be accepted by email. All assignments must meet the Paper Submission Guidelines (see above). Assignments turned in late will be accepted but, as a courtesy to me and your fellow classmates, these drafts will not receive any written comments from me. A major component of your final portfolio will focus on revision, and a draft without comments cannot be effectively revised. Also, each day an assignment is late will lead to a loss of participation points. (If you feel that you have an extenuating circumstance that prevents you from submitting work on time, you should talk with me *as soon as possible*.)

OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

I enjoy teaching and I enjoy talking to you, so if you have questions that we did not answer in class or if you want to discuss papers or receive feedback on a draft-in-progress, let's set up a time. I will hold regular drop-in office hours throughout the quarter and I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to come visit with me if you have any concerns about the course, its content, or any other related subject. I'm available at times other than those listed at the top of the syllabus, so please ask me for an alternate time if those hours don't work. I check my email infrequently on weekends, but at other times I am happy to answer brief questions over email. For more involved questions, please see me in my office hours.

PLAGIARISM

The use of another's work—or your own work completed for different assignments—in writing without citing their contribution, whether intentional or accidental, is a serious offense. If you are ever in a situation in which you are concerned whether your presentation of information is plagiarism or not, it is your responsibility to vet your writing with an instructor or writing tutor before you present it as your own work. Plagiarism of any sort is not tolerated.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who feels she/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at x2475 or via email at dss@spu.edu, or stop by the office (Center for Learning) to confidentially discuss specific needs and coordinate reasonable accommodations for a documented disability.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center (Lower Moyer Hall) is an excellent resource for working on your writing with an experienced and specially-trained consultant. Writing Centers are for writers of every level, not just for beginning writers, and the best writing is produced through collaboration with other readers and writers. Visit the [website](http://www.spu.edu/depts/cfl/writing.asp) (www.spu.edu/depts/cfl/writing.asp), or by searching “Writing Center” at spu.edu), call 206-281-2475, or stop by the Center for Learning front desk for more information.

CALENDAR

Here is a calendar with due dates for your major assignments. More specific calendars with readings and daily homework will be distributed with the Sequence 1 and Sequence 2 assignments.

Sequence One:	Assigned 1/4	
Short Paper 1.1:	Assigned 1/6	Due Sunday, 1/8
Short Paper 1.2:	Assigned 1/11	Due Sunday, 1/15
Major Paper 1:	Assigned 1/16	Draft 1 Due Friday, 1/27 (Peer Review†) Draft 2 Due Sunday, 1/29
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Sequence Two:	Assigned 1/30	
Short Paper 2.1.1:	Assigned 1/30	Due Friday, 2/3
Short Paper 2.1.2:	Assigned 2/3	Due Sunday, 2/5
Short Paper 2.2:	Assigned 2/6	Due Sunday, 2/12
Major Paper 2:	Assigned 2/13	Draft 1 Due Wed., 2/22 (Peer Review†) Draft 2 Due Sunday, 2/26
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Portfolio Sequence:	Assigned 2/20	
Cover Letter		Draft Due Monday, 3/6
Final Portfolio		Due Wednesday, 3/15
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Other Important Dates:		
Conference One†		Thurs. 1/19 and Fri. 1/20
Peer Review Workshop†		Monday, 1/23
Conference Two†		Thurs. 3/2 and Fri. 3/3

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

Report an Emergency or Suspicious Activity

Call the Office of Safety and Security to report an emergency or suspicious activity by dialing 206-281-2911 or by pressing the call button on a campus emergency phone. SPU Security Officers are trained first responders and will be dispatched to your location. If needed, the SPU Dispatcher will contact local fire/police with the exact address of the location of the emergency.

SPU-Alert System

The SPU-Alert System is SPU's emergency notification system. It can send information via text message, email, electronic reader board, computer pop-ups (for SPU computers), loudspeaker, and recorded cell phone messages. Text messaging has generally proven to be the quickest way to receive an alert about a campus emergency. In order to receive text messages from SPU-Alert, you must provide SPU with your cell phone number through the Banner Information System on the web, <https://www.spu.edu/banweb/>. Select the Personal Menu then choose the Emergency Alert System tab. Contact the CIS Help Desk if you have questions about entering your personal contact information into the Banner Information System. Emergency announcements may also be made by SPU staff members serving as Building Emergency Coordinators ("BECs").

Lockdown / Shelter in Place – General Guidance

The University will lock down in response to threats of violence such as a bank robbery or armed intruder on campus. You can assume that all remaining classes and events will be temporarily suspended until the incident is over. Lockdown notifications are sent using the SPU-Alert System.

If you are in a building at the time of a lockdown:

- Stay inside and await instruction, unless you are in immediate visible danger.
- Move to a securable area (such as an office or classroom) and lock the doors.
- Close the window coverings then move away from the windows and get low on the floor.
- Remain in your secure area until further direction or the all clear is given (this notification will be sent via the SPU-Alert System).

If you are outside at the time of a lockdown:

- Leave the area and seek safe shelter off campus. Remaining in the area of the threat may expose you to danger.
- Return to campus after the all clear is given (this notification will be sent via the SPU-Alert System).

Evacuation – General Guidance

Students should evacuate a building if the fire alarm sounds or if a faculty member, a staff member, or the SPU-Alert System instructs building occupants to evacuate. In the event of an evacuation, gather your personal belongings quickly and proceed to the nearest exit. Most classrooms contain a wall plaque or poster on or next to the classroom door showing the evacuation route and the assembly site for the building. Do not use the elevator. Once you have evacuated the building, proceed to the nearest evacuation assembly location. The "*Stop. Think. Act.*" booklet posted in each classroom contains a list of assembly sites for each building. Check in with your instructor or a BEC (they will be easily recognizable by their bright orange vests). During emergencies, give each BEC your full cooperation whenever they issue directions.

Additional Information

Additional information about emergency preparedness can be found on the SPU web page at <http://www.spu.edu/info/emergency/index.asp> or by calling the Office of Safety and Security at 206-281-2922.