

Writing for Social Change
UNST 203 / Section xxx / Semester
Days / Time / Location

Instructor:	N/A		Office Hours:	N/A
Email:	N/A		Mailbox:	N/A
Office:	N/A			

DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course will explore the personal and political transformative potential of writing. The primary assumption behind the course is that words can be tools of power, agency, and change and that virtually all writing, which is rooted in language systems, is meaningful and political. Students will be exposed to some basic interdisciplinary theoretical foundations about the power of the written word and will explore different forms of writing that are explicitly connected to change, such as personal narratives and journal entries to manifestos, blogs, editorials, issue essays, and letters. Student work will connect the political and the aesthetic. This course specifically engages socially-relevant writing which has the capacity to reveal the “truth” about our lives and the myriad ways issues affect real human subjects. *No pre- or co-requisites required. This course falls under the “Community, Conflict, and Society” theme-based cluster category.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To foster critical thinking skills: creative problem solving; the ability to organize and synthesize materials and critically analyze texts to facilitate the exploration and interrogation of social structures.
2. To develop students’ written, oral, and visual communication skills.
3. To foster understanding of the ways people can use writing for liberation, both personally and socio-politically.
4. To articulate and evaluate students’ own and others’ perspectives on social systems that produce injustice.
5. To collaboratively create a positive learning environment that encourages critical inquiry, expression, exploration, and creativity.
6. To practice the values and communication habits of a socially responsible, engaged, and active citizenry.

COURSE METHODS

The methods for this student-centered course will be grounded in four basic theoretical concepts:

1. **Expressive:** In this course, students will engage in activities to help them express their ideas, experiences, and questions. We will accomplish this through journals, writing exercises, discussion, and group activities. In this sense, much of our work will be about self-expression – to harness language and form to creatively communicate the self to a broader community.
2. **Formal:** Through reading a variety of interdisciplinary texts about writing and socio-political issues and through discussion, students will work with a variety of the conventions and techniques of structured, academic communication such as writing and presentation.
3. **Cognitive:** It is important for critical thinkers to be conscious of their assumptions and the choices they make, whether it be as broad as the choices they make about their lives, as writers, or as citizens. We will work with basic comprehension of the theoretical groundings

of the course and work toward making larger connections between readings, ideas, the written word, and our lives.

4. **Social:** We will engage in the social aspects of academic work such as understanding audience, collaboration, discussion of articles, writing communities, and etc.

REQUIRED MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- *Writing to Change the World* by Mary Pipher (2006)
- A NCAT email address & daily Blackboard access
- Writing materials for every class (i.e. paper/notebook, pen or pencil).
- Computer and printer access
- Folder/binder for storing work
- Stapler and/or paperclips

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

(Other current readings, contemporary to the class, TBA throughout the semester to match assignment and student interest)

- Personal essays and memoir/autobiographical pieces
- Newspaper articles and editorials such as:
 - “Community We Can Believe In” by columnist Bill Kristol (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/12/opinion/12kristol.html?_r=1&ref=opinion)
 - “Marriage On the Rocks” by columnist Maureen Dowd (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/opinion/23dowd.html>)
- Sample blogs such as:
 - *Angry Asian Man* (<http://www.angryasianman.com/angry.html>)
 - *Racialicious* (<http://www.racialicious.com/>)
- Sample “This I Believe Essays”
 - See site: (http://www.thisibelieve.org/dsp_Browse.php)
- Academic readings such as:
 - Barton, Marsha. "Internet Journalism Will Transform the Media Industry." *Opposing Viewpoints: Mass Media*. William Dudley. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2005.
 - "Blogging Is Important to Journalism." *At Issue: User-Generated Content*. Roman Espejo. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2007.
 - Prillinger, Horst. "Blogging Is Not Journalism." *At Issue: User-Generated Content*. Roman Espejo. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2007.

*Note: Although this class is very writing-heavy, please expect to continuously read both the primary text and the supplementary readings to match the major writing assignment we will work on. The more one reads, the more effective one's writing will be.

MAJOR COURSEWORK & SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS [200 points]

The following is a general description of the major assignments for the semester so you can get a sense of what will be expected of you. However, you will receive a detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric for each of the major assignments described below. Note: the instructor reserves the right to amend the assignments and syllabus.

Conferences [Required]

One of my goals as the instructor of the course is to mentor you in your academic pursuits. Therefore, I require at least two one-on-one conferences this semester, one per each half of the semester. You are welcome to as many conferences as you'd like or need. However, if you do not attend the two required, you will lose five points each from your participation grade, a possible total of ten points.

Participation [20 points]

To succeed in this class, you are required to actively participate. Participation includes preparedness with readings and assignments, a willingness to thoughtfully engage the materials, respectful treatment of your colleagues, and participation in discussion and activities. You are also expected to conduct yourself with proper university classroom etiquette (please see classroom etiquette and civility policy).

Homework [20 points]

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to complete writing activities/ papers for homework. These will be used in a variety of ways in the classroom, so please be prepared to share these if/when asked. Like all other homework in the course, these will be typed and MLA formatted.

“I Am From” Poem [5 points]

You are a unique individual with a specific background, experiences, and belief systems. This assignment will help you experiment with identity and values to facilitate your written understanding of yourself. (Read: Pipher chapters 1 “Writing to Connect,” and 2 “Know Thy Self”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4 / Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 2, 3, 4, 9, 16**

Personal Narrative [30 points]

This will be your first formal essay, a 6-8 page “informed narrative essay” about yourself. You will choose one or two moments, issues, or events to narrate your own self and personal knowledge. Embedded in this essay will be pre-writing activities, a rough draft, peer revision, and the final draft. (Read: Pipher chapters 3 “What You Alone Can Say,” 4 “Growing Our Souls,” 5 “Diving In – Getting Started”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 2, 3, 11, 13, 16**

Change Statement and Plan [5 points]

After you have written about yourself, you have hopefully begun to deepen your relationship with yourself, your values, goals, and desires. You will write a brief three page change statement and plan to describe what your own personal goals are for the rest of the semester as they relate to the content of this class. This assignment is directly related to the final reflection and should help you self-evaluate at the end of the semester. (Read: Pipher Chapter 7 “The Psychology of Change”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 2, 3, 16, 17**

Blog [40 points]

Around midterm, we will move from the personal to the public by starting a blog which will require basic personal introduction information, visuals to represent yourself, a manifesto, a minimum of ten links to other relevant and appropriate web resources from various disciplinary approaches, and at least five 500-word entries due the following weeks: X, X, X, X, and X. (Read Pipher chapters 5 “Mr. USA” and 14 “Blogs – A Revolutionary New Tool”; online articles on Bb) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 14, 17**

“This I Believe” Assignment [60 points]

This assignment has three parts: 1) research through an annotated bibliography, 2) a personal essay on an issue, and 3) a performance representing the essay. (Read Pipher chapters 8 “Swimming Along – The Writing Process,” 9 “Point of View,” 10 “Cooling Down—Revising,” and 13 “Personal Essays”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17**

- **Annotated Bibliography [15 points]:** For your formal essay, I want you to inform your perspective with interdisciplinary research (sources from varying perspectives, e.g. history, journalism, social science, hard science, etc.). For example, you might need a better understanding of the historical moment and might turn to a history text. Or, you might want a deeper understanding of the way violence hurts people psychologically, and thus will turn to psychology texts. We will discuss legitimate sources. No websites will be allowed. **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 4, 6**
- **“This I Believe” Essay [30 points]:** This essay will be a full-throated piece on your perspective on a topic, basically, an argument with a strong editorial voice. It will be well-informed, including your research from your annotated bibliography. **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6**
- **“This I Believe” Performance [15 points]:** This will be a five-minute performance on the topic of your essay to help you develop the visual and oral component of the course. Get creative: use pictures, cut out images from magazines that symbolize some of the issues covered, paint, glue string and rope and yarn, etc. Make a statement! (Read Pipher chapter 12 “Speeches” and 15 “Music and Poetry”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

Letter [10 points]

Find an appropriate audience for an issue and your perspective on it; write a 2-page letter to this audience asking them to change their policy or consider a new perspective. (Read Pipher chapter 11 “Letters”) **Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 2, 3, 12, 14, 17**

Final Reflection [10 points]

In her book *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* scholar Kathleen Yancey explains, “...reflection entails a looking forward to goals we might attain, as well as a casting backward to see where we have been. When we reflect, we thus project and review, often putting the projections and reviews in dialogue with each other...as we seek to discover what we know, what we have learned, and what we might understand” (Yancey). Write about what you’ve learned during this semester; this should be explicitly connected to the change statement and plan you wrote at the beginning of the semester. In **3 pages (MLA formatted)**, explore your learning experiences. *The paper should have a thesis, topic sentences, and development using specific evidence.*

Course Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6/ Fulfills UNST Learning Objectives: 2, 3, 12, 14, 16, 17

Extra Credit [5 points]

You have one extra credit opportunity: write a letter to the editor of a paper in response to an article. This effectively equals 2.5 percentage points, which could potentially bump your grade up a full grade depending on how many points you earn from your regular coursework.

GRADING & POINTS

Note: Grades are based on points earned and are absolutely non-negotiable.

Assignment & Total Points	Points Earned	Grading Scale
Participation (20)	_____	200-180 = A
Homework (20)	_____	179-160 = B
“I Am From” Poem (5)	_____	159-140 = C
Personal Narrative (30)	_____	139-120 = D
Change Statement/Plan (5)	_____	119 or less = Fail
Blog (40)	_____	
“This I Believe” Project (60)	_____	
Political Letter (10)	_____	
Final Reflection (10)	_____	
Total Points (200)	Total:	

EVALUATION

1) SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: All assignments will be assessed using a grading rubric which will be distributed to students so they have a clear understanding of how they will be evaluated. The following model rubric is an example. Note: All rubrics will be constructed for specific assignments.

Sample Rubric for “This I Believe” Essay

Requirements	A	B	C	D	F
Audience and Tone	Diction and tone are appropriate (10-9)	Diction and tone are mostly appropriate (8)	Diction and tone are inconsistent (7)	Diction and tone are consistently inappropriate (6)	No thought given at all to diction or tone (5-0)
Organization	Moves from a brief summary and basic claim through a detailed analysis of main points (25-23)	Delivers a thoughtful and careful analysis of main points (22-20)	Shows general understanding of main points, occasionally confusing terms or missing an important idea (19-18)	Moves randomly from one point to another, skimming the surface (17-15)	No evident regard for organization or structure (14-0)
Thesis and Context	Thesis is clear and narrow with attention given to paper’s larger context (25-23)	Thesis is clear and context is provided (22-20)	Thesis could be more focused; some context is provided (19-18)	Thesis is vague with little context given (17-15)	No thesis or context provided (14-0)
Sources	Cites relevant examples and direct quotations to support all claims (15-14)	Cites relevant examples and direct quotations to support most claims. (13-12)	Cites examples and direct quotations with limited relevance (11)	Cites general details to support one or two claims with few or no direct quotations (10-9)	No satisfactory evidence given to support claims (8-0)
MLA Format	Correct MLA style format (15-14)	Few and minor MLA style format errors (13-12)	Some MLA style formatting errors (11)	Many MLA style formatting errors (10-9)	Unrecognizable format style (8-0)
Grammar, Mechanics, and Correctness	Uses proper punctuation, correct spelling, and grammatically correct phrasing throughout (10-9)	Uses proper punctuation, correct spelling, and correct grammar with one or two recurring or incidental errors (8)	Mixes proper punctuation, correct spelling, and correct grammar with several recurring and incidental errors (7)	Shows a general lack of understanding about punctuation, spelling, and grammar with many errors that affect clarity (6)	Uses irregular, random punctuation, spelling, and grammar throughout (5-0)

2) FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: As in all UNST courses, this course embed formative assessment in class activities, consistently, help foster improved student learning.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

University Studies strives to professionalize its students; therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in all UNST courses. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Absent or tardy students are responsible for any missed class work, including any changes to the syllabus or assignments announced in class. In short, absences and tardiness can/will diminish your grade. If you suffer prolonged illness or misfortune, you should consider dropping the course. Persistent tardiness and failure to observe established classroom etiquette will lead to failure of the course. Student athletes must submit a schedule of days they will be absent within the first week of classes.

Students will automatically receive an “F” for missing the equivalent of two weeks of class (six absences for a M, W, F schedule; four absences for a T, R schedule). At half the allotted absences (three absences for a M, W, F schedule; two absences for a T, R schedule), students are required to meet with instructor for a mandatory one-on-one conference concerning their performance in class. Students are responsible for checking her/his email for instructor communication. If the instructor does not receive a response regarding an attendance conference, the opportunity is revoked.

Absence or tardiness is only excused for emergency situations. **Students are responsible for submitting acceptable documentation for the Excused Absence within one week of the absence.** Examples of acceptable documentation include:

- Written doctor’s note specifically requesting an excused absence (with the specific time and date on the notification)
- Obituary or service
- An official written summons to court

Persistent tardiness and failure to observe established classroom etiquette will not be tolerated. All cell phones and personal pagers must be tuned off for the duration of the class period.

Turning in Work

- All homework assignments must be typed in MLA format.
- For revisions, please turn in all drafts along with the final draft in reverse chronological order. I.e. The earliest draft is at the very bottom. Please secure all drafts with staples or paper clips.

Late Work

Late work will NOT be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements with me regarding EXTREME circumstances. Furthermore, I absolutely will not accept or grade late work that is placed in my office, under my office door, in my mailbox, or through email unless previous arrangements have been made with me. Don’t waste your time, energy, or paper doing so.

Classroom Etiquette and Civility

Everyone in our classroom is responsible for our shared learning/writing environment. Please extend common classroom courtesies to your colleagues. I expect you well understand proper classroom conduct, but to be clearer, here are some basic guidelines:

- Be respectful when responding to the work or ideas of your colleagues. Please respond to others, whether you appreciate their work or not, in a thoughtful and

- respectful manner. Remember, non-verbal communication can speak as loud as verbal comments.
- Refrain from racist, sexist, homophobic, or other derogatory language. Any hostile or abusive language will not be tolerated. Please refer to *The Student Affairs Handbook* for University policies on this topic.
 - Do not disrupt the learning environment. This includes, but is not limited to, talking or whispering to others while someone else has the floor, loudly eating (note: food wrappers can be quite loud), and shuffling through your schoolbag.
 - Turn your cell phone off for class. If you are expecting an emergency and must leave your phone on, please talk to me before class.

Contacting the Instructor

I prefer email communication. It is rare that I answer my office phone or check my office messages. Generally, if I do not respond to your email within 24 hours, I probably didn't get it and you need to either resend it or talk with me in person. Similarly, if you email me right before class, late at night, or early in the morning, chances are I won't get it until after class or until I start my workday.

General Course Schedule

Week	In-class Activity	Readings/Homework
1 Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to course • Community building • Defining terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pipher Introduction and Handout • Read: Pipher chapters 1 “Writing to Connect,” and 2 “Know Thy Self”
2 Personal Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Discussion and activities around identity & values • Reading discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I Am From” poem due • Meet for first conferences • Read: Pipher chapters 3 “What You Alone Can Say,” 4 “Growing Our Souls,” 5 “Diving In – Getting Started”
3 Personal Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities • Peer review/writing workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal narrative rough draft due • Read sample personal essays
4 Personal Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal narrative final draft due • Read: Pipher Chapter 7 “The Psychology of Change”
5 Personal Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change statement/plan due • Read Pipher chapters 5 “Mr. USA” and 14 “Blogs – A Revolutionary New Tool” • Introduction to blog assignment • Read sample blog articles on Bb
6 Going Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Prewriting activities • Evaluating blogs • Research basics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Pipher chapters and 8 “Swimming Along – The Writing Process,” 9 “Point of View” • Read sample “Manifestos” • Read sample blogs on Bb
7 Intensive Writing Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to “This I Believe” project • Read Piper chapter 13 “Personal Essays” • Read sample essays on Bb
8 Intensive Writing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to set up your second conference • Continue reading/research for bibliography
9 Intensive Writing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annotated bibliography due • Read Piper chapters 10 “Cooling Down—Revising • Read sample essays
10 Intensive Writing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read sample editorials on Bb
11 Intensive Writing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Peer review/writing workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This I Believe” rough draft due
12 Intensive Writing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings • Writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Pipher chapter 11 “Letters”
13 Performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This I Believe” performances and final drafts due 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute reflection assignment
14 Performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This I Believe” performances and final drafts due 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter assignment due
15 The End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final reflection due • Course review and conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Semester