

## College Writing R4B

### Strange Days: Technology and our Complex Identities

**Class:** Tues/Thurs, 89 Dwinelle [12.30-2pm]

**Instructor:** Ryan Sloan // [rsloan@berkeley.edu](mailto:rsloan@berkeley.edu)

**Conferences:** Tues 2-4 and by appt // [M15 Wheeler Hall](#) (lower College Writing Programs floor, on mezzanine between ground and first floors)

#### **Section Description:**

Who are we? How do our tools filter how we see the world -- and shape what are we becoming? We'll examine surreal, funny, strange, heartbreaking work that grapples with the complexities of society's relationship with technology.

We'll read multimedia longform journalism on our inhumanity toward robots and the desire to revive our dead friends; the history of trolls, memes and tumblr teens; post-apocalyptic humor as theatre of the absurd; satirical short works on consumer trends run amok; darkly hilarious animated television with surprising depth; creative nonfiction, short fiction, graphic novel excerpts, and academic writing that explore the boundaries of the playful, the thoughtful, and the grotesque.

You'll work with a number of digital platforms, have rich discussions with your peers, develop stronger analytical skills, and conduct research on a sustained project of your own choosing: the complexity of internet shaming / social media / music / memory / mortality / immigration / travel / gender / gentrification / dating / education / [insert your passion here!].

#### **Book List:**

Texts: *Craft of Research* available at the Cal student bookstore, but if you find used or digital versions, please feel free to get those! Nearly all of our reading will be free, smaller, digital excerpts and articles collected by me in the Digital Course Reader on bCourses.

**Craft of Research** (Booth) -- EAN 9780226239736

#### **Digital Course Reader (free, accessible on our class bCourses site)**

**Films & Video:** clips from *Get Out*, *Bojack Horseman*, *Rick & Morty*, *Black Mirror*, *Westworld*, *Wall-E*

**TOOLS:**

This is a writing course that leverages digital learning and ‘flipped classroom’ pedagogies [more on this later]. As such, we’ll meet three times a week in person and you’ll be expected to do online assignments by specific deadlines. The core tools we’ll use:

- **bCourses Discussions:** Analytical responses to shared Readings, interesting resources you find, ungraded Projects, and more. This will be our central node.
- **bCourses Assignments:** You’ll submit links to your writing blog when Assignments are due [see below]
- **Portfolio site:** You’ll have a writing blog on Weebly [or the platform of your choice] and, eventually, several static pages for your finished projects as they emerge.
  - In the writing blog, you’ll be asked to regularly post freewrites, brainstorming, drafts, self-assessments, useful images / video / links / social media.
  - On the larger site, you’ll post final versions of Projects I, II and III, as well as an introductory note/video.

**PROJECTS:**

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

<i>Digital Portfolio Website: form &amp; content</i>	<b>10%</b>
<i>Consistent digital writing, via online forums &amp; blog writing</i>	<b>10%</b>
<i>Engaged participation, peer review, project drafts, workshopping</i>	<b>10%</b>

*Major Projects:*

Project 1:	<b>20%</b>
Project 2:	<b>20%</b>
Final Project:	<b>30%</b>

**Digital Portfolio Website, with Blog**

*Robust Weebly site with blog, specific project pages, a table of contents, and overall rhetorically effective design, using a range of modes. 100 points*

-Throughout the semester, you'll **gather useful brainstorming, research, images, video, audio, text from credible sources**, archived on the blog -- and also provide **links and context/analysis** re: leading experts and debates in the topics you find intriguing. [Feel free to use another free platform as well. Come see me if you're unsure!]

- By the end, the landing page for your website will have a **short intro and table of contents, along with drop-down menus, for each of your completed projects and the research reflection.** Give us brief context for what's in the overall site.

-**Final grade** will reflect consistent, strong work throughout the semester at every stage of project development. The website will also reflect engaging rhetorical choices using various modes (visual, audio, textual, color, typography, links), that help immerse us in the course themes.

*Consistent digital writing, via online forums & blog writing* **100 points**  
*Engaged participation, peer review, project drafts, workshopping* **100 points**

Please note the importance I have placed on consistently writing twice a week, depending on the assignment. Writing is a muscle, and with regular practice in a structured, supportive community, you will absolutely grow by the end of the semester.

I will check in with you at key moments, via the Gradebook and in class, if you start to fall behind on digital and in-person engagement -- but ultimately, if writing is a muscle, consistency is up to you! I strongly encourage you to get into the habit of simply scheduling writing time twice a week.

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### **Project I - Multimodal Expository Essay**

*[1200-1500 words, plus images, links, and other modes -- 200 points. Post on blog and post link to bCourses Assignment]*

**For our first project, we'll read two themed clusters, with main texts and supporting lens texts largely chosen by me:**

- **Artificial Intelligence and Emotional Tangles**
- **Belief, Loss, and Technology**

We will practice incorporating multiple edited sources -- some of which you'll find yourself -- as a vehicle for exploring the complexities of the larger discussions underway in our culture.

You can choose one of the core themes and then start to make the topic your own, by finding concepts that intrigue you and asking questions based on the evidence you find that will drive your essay.

Alternatively, you can break away from the preset themes and do a mashup of the main texts we've read -- start with the article that most intrigues you, and inductively build your own

essay with a mix of any Project I assigned texts at its core.

Some initial jumping-off points:

- Start to gather specific passages and dig into them -- what's there that resists easy answers?
- What connections and reflection will require outside research?
- Your goal will be not to narrowly argue one position [artificial intelligence is bad // progress is inevitable] as to explore a big-picture question -- a search, based on evidence and reflection, in which you are writing this essay to arrive somewhere surprising and unexpected.
- Weigh many sides of the issue with ethos, add a new angle or dimension to the debate, and bring your own perspective to bear as you join the discussion.

In roughly 1200-1500 words of text and other modes, you'll practice paraphrase and effective quotation with citation, contextual hyperlinks, use of image/video/audio with citation, close analysis and evidence-based reflection, and start to advance your own sustained argument.

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## **Project II - Digital Research Clusters**

**[1500 words or more in total**, plus images, links, and other modes -- Wk 11, **200 points**. Post on blog and post link to bCourses Assignment]

In contrast to Project I, which was more of a straightforward essay assignment, the Project II assignments are designed to help you **develop your research skills**, while also **scaffolding the material you might use** for Project III [the Final Research Project].

There are **four** components to Project II:

-Thoughtful **Forums responses to curated Cluster texts**, followed by your own **research on new sources of evidence**[text + multimodal] to any 3 themed Clusters [part of the larger Digital Writing grade]

-**Library Exercises 1-6:** [50 pts]

- 1) Selfie Scavenger Hunt Library Orientation
- 2) Keyword Combos + Finding Articles for a General Audience (Hunting the Databases)
- 3) Book Research—Old School
- 4) Prospectus Brainstorming on Blog
- 5) Searching for Scholarly Sources
- 6) Digital Searches for Primary Sources (Library of Congress, Bancroft, Calisphere)

- **Research Slidedecks:** choose one Cluster from the three (or a hybrid combo). Scaffold your

brainstorming, evidence, analysis & concepts, with an eye toward Content, Structure, and Design. 5 minute talks, in class. [100 pts]

**-Expanded Written Research Project Prospectus with Annotated Bibliography** draft [50 pts]

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### **Project III - Digital Research Project**

*[2000-4000 words, including Final Project on website, along with abstract, archived drafts, research proposal, works cited, annotated bibliography, and research notes. The Digital Research Project will utilize images, links, and other modes - Wk 16, 300 points. Post on blog and post link to bCourses Assignment]*

Your final digital research project will be driven by **themes and questions that are genuinely interesting for you.**

Try to constrain your search for interesting materials by connecting them with a thoughtful concept, and then branch off through brainstorming about a few of the most interesting avenues for you as a writer.

Narrow your topic down to a focused research question that explores an issue you'd like to explore for a month (or more). You will then conduct research to try to come to an answer to that question, and write an essay documenting what you find and giving your perspective on the subject you've chosen.

The place to begin would be to identify one or more topics of interest to you, and then to begin hunting for information about the topic(s) to see what's out there, and whether the source material furthers your interest, leads to revisions in your topic focus, or causes you to choose an entirely different topic for your project.

**Possible topics might include** problematizing / an exploration of the hidden culture of...

- Digital identity
- Social media
- eMedicine
- Dating & interpersonal connection
- Sustainable architecture
- Wearable technology and personal monitoring
- Predictive / personalized genetic medicine & human modification
- Environmental sustainability
- Education and access

- Gender complexity
- Sports and brain trauma
- Entertainment, new media, and fake news
- Immigration, demographic shifts, and politics

**Final Research Project Components, all on your blog / site:**

- 1) Abstract
- 2) Final Draft of the essay
- 3) Works Cited in MLA style. At least seven sources must be cited in your paper.
- 4) Final, revised Annotated Bibliography [expanded version of Works Cited -- anything useful along the way, and why/how, even if not referenced in your paper]
- 5) Research reflection (either as a multimodal essay or as a digital artifact; see detail below)
- 6) *Research notes (gathered along the way -- notes and library exercises in blog)*
- 7) *Preliminary drafts with comments from peers (uploaded gradually to blog)*
- 8) *Other supplemental materials (if any) you deem useful to include [e.g. artifacts, visual documents, materials from your oral presentation, etc.] uploaded gradually to blog)*

**Drafting Elements for the Final Project**

*There are a lot of moving pieces that are due in R4B (and in academic research)). Each of these elements is intended to help you develop a stronger project. We'll build these elements gradually, along with your project.*

**1) Research Proposal – Brainstorming, Draft, Revision(s)**

For the first stage of your research project, **list a few topics and/or questions that you might like to pursue**. These could be relatively broad topics or more focused questions or subject areas. You can list as many as you like, but at a minimum, list three in which you're truly interested. At this point, you are not committed to pursuing any of these in your final project so much as indicating some initial interests. Brainstorm:

- the topic you plan to pursue;
- a specific question you hope to explore;
- what sorts of materials you've consulted and why they'll be credible/useful;
- who you're initially imagining as your intended audience (uninformed/neutral or opposed to your position) and why;
- and, if you'd like, a listing of some self-imposed due dates for completing various tasks in your research.

## ***2) Sources for your Project // Library Exercises + Own Research***

You'll undertake **several "Library Exercises"** to get you underway on your search for a variety of sources for your essay so that you can credibly report on your topic. You'll post your findings and brainstorming prospectus on your blog. There will be some flexibility in the nature of the sources that you choose based on which topic you settle on, but you should try to find sources of different types as best you can. In writing your paper, as a baseline you should cite at least seven sources -- but you're welcome to use many more.

## ***3) Research Notes***

You will need to **gradually keep notes on useful sources** so you can keep yourself organized, make sure you've documented those sources fairly, and, ultimately, make the writing of your paper an easier process for yourself. While the temptation may be to just copy/paste key passages and dump them in one running file, you'll need to be a bit more careful.

You can keep notes in blog entries or a google doc, but you should clearly document your notes on each of your key sources, keep track of bibliographic information, and clearly distinguish between which parts of your notes are quotes from a source, and which parts are paraphrases, summaries, or your own comments on the source. Protect yourself from accidental plagiarism!

**In general, an important takeaway is learning how to manage your source materials -- many people feel overwhelmed otherwise.**

## ***4) Your Presentation***

This will be a quick oral presentation on your topic that you'll give to the class. In effect, this is like a mini-peer review of your research to date. You'll have about five minutes to present to the class, in summary form, the following:

- what your research question is
- whether you have a preliminary working thesis (or hypothesis) about what you think you will be arguing in answer to that research question
- a brief overview of your research thus far: what kinds of sources you're finding
- and, perhaps most importantly, what you could use some help or feedback on from the class.

During any given presentation, you will have one of three roles to play:

- (1) presenter,
- (2) audience member, or
- (3) notetaker.

If you're presenting, your role is obvious. When you're an audience member, you should be writing down any questions or comments that arise for you as the presenter is speaking. After

the presentation, there will be a five-minute Q&A where you, the audience, will have a chance to offer comments or ask questions of the presenter. If you have a useful comment/question to offer and there isn't time to raise it afterward, you should pass it on to the presenter's notetaker. Who is the notetaker? I'll pair each of you with one other person in the class (who isn't presenting on the same day) to be your notetaker. When you're notetaker, you are to take notes on the discussion that follows your partner's presentation, collect any additional comments that people give you, and then to put those notes in clear summary form in an email to the presenter, copying me on the email. This email should be sent within 24 hours of the presentation. Someone else will then do the same for you when you are presenting.

*One note: this assignment also prepares you for the **required R4B Research Festival from 10-noon on Monday of RRR Week on 5th Floor Moffitt Library.***

### **5) Annotated Bibliography**

This is different from the Works Cited, which lists only the bibliographic information for sources you actually cited in your final paper. The annotated bibliography is a separate document that not only lists the sources you read during your research, but also summarizes and evaluates those sources. (If you write a short note on your blog about each useful source over the six weeks of Final Project drafting, you'll have most of the core material already for an Annotated Bibliography. Then, all you'll have to do to prepare your Works Cited is cut out some of the information and note what you actually used in the final version.)

After each source in the bibliography, include two brief paragraphs. The first paragraph should **summarize the source's main topics, ideas, claims, and evidence**. The second paragraph should **evaluate the source's reliability, persuasiveness, and bias, comparing the source to the others in your bibliography and stating how helpful the source was to you during your research** and composing process. In at least one of the two paragraphs there should be an identification of **who the author(s) of the piece are**.

Your draft bibliography should list at least eight of the sources you've consulted, and should reflect your efforts to find sources of a variety of types. Your final bibliography should list all of the sources you end up citing in your paper and any additional sources that you didn't end up using directly but which had some influence on your thinking in the paper.

### **6) Outline or Storyboard**



Using one of the suggested formats detailed in *The Craft of Research* for either an outline (pages 175-176) or a storyboard (page 131), put together a picture of your plan for your preliminary draft and put on your blog.

**7) Research Reflection: Short Essay or Digital Artifact** (due on final day of class)

After you've completed your research, you will write a **2-3 page reflection that focuses on the process of your research** over the course of this semester. What steps did you take? What discoveries? What roadblocks did you encounter? What choices did you make? What was useful and interesting about the process? This reflection is about your research process, and how you've developed as a writer, reader, and thinker over 15 weeks.

**Alternative, Digital Approach to the Research Reflection:** You have the option of completing this portion of the assignment by **creating a digital artifact** that expresses your reflections about your research process. Instead of writing the 2-3 page paper above, you can choose to reflect in a format that is designed expressly to be engaged with on the Internet, and combines some mixture of at least two of the following: text, images, sound, video, and links.

Remember: **multimodality is not just decoration** -- every piece of evidence should be focused and persuasive; design (sequence and juxtaposition) is a rhetorical move; and whenever possible, analysis of evidence is important, whether text, image, video, sound, etc.

In addition to the tools already available on your Wordpress writing platform, here are some **possible sites for platforms** you could try out / model after if you decide to take the digital artifact approach to your research reflection.

- YouTube [uploading raw video reflection -- consider digital privacy / identity issues]: <https://www.youtube.com>
- SoundCloud [uploading audio reflection]: <https://soundcloud.com>
- Instagram [video / image / text in visually-driven chunks]: <http://instagram.com>
- Google Slides [free digital slidedeck]: <http://slides.google.com/>
- iMovie [layering images and video with voiceover, exported to YouTube]: <http://www.apple.com/imovie/>
- Prezi [animated presentations]: <http://prezi.com>
- Voicethread [narrated presentations]: <http://voicethread.com>
- Storify [blog-based stories]: <http://storify.com/>
- Storybird [story & art platform]: <http://storybird.com/>
- Pixton [comics]: <http://pixton.com/uk/>
- Weebly [websites]: <http://www.weebly.com/>
- Animoto: <http://animoto.com/>

- Wikispaces: <http://www.wikispaces.com/content/classroom>

For this part of your project, you choose the approach—the reflective essay or the digital artifact—that most appeals to you.

### **8) Abstract (due on final day of class)**

Your abstract will be a brief, focused (paragraph-long) summary of the most important aspects of your paper. Though it's the first thing that will appear for readers in your final project page, you should wait until you've almost completed your final draft (at least everything except proofreading) before writing your abstract. As you search for articles in the library databases, you will probably see lots of examples of abstracts, particularly for articles appearing in academic journals. Also, check out pages 211-212 in *The Craft of Research* for suggestions on different ways of structuring abstracts; you can use those as models for yours. (I'll also share a couple of past student abstracts with you also.)

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### **Overview and Workload:**

College Writing R4B is a four-unit course that can be used toward satisfying the U.C. Berkeley R&C requirement. You'll be getting sustained practice in the recursive processes entailed in reading, critical analysis, and expository writing, learning how to incorporate digital evidence, create multimodal projects, and completing a major project that will be due at the end of the semester. In keeping with the aims of this latter project and the shorter assignments leading up to it, this course will also offer experience with navigating and using the vast library resources available to you here at Cal.

In this composition course, you will engage with texts that consider questions around our deliberately open-ended theme of the Future; you will work on reading and writing skills by writing a series of essays about those texts (and those questions); and you'll learn the rudiments of multimodal composition as you craft a project centered on a subject of your own choosing that fits within our course theme.

As we go along in the early weeks of the course, start thinking about what interests you in this subject area, what you might like to learn more about. We'll give you formal prompts on this, but keep your radar up and start doing some active note-taking or journaling on your own. The hope is that after we've done some shared readings and assignments, each of you will find an independent topic that engages you to pursue for your final project.

Finally, a few words about the day-to-day structure of this course: This is not a lecture course. As such, you're expected to be actively engaged—with the material and with each other. You should come prepared, in class and in online discussions, ready to discuss the readings and your writing, and ready to pose questions and observations that will help you, us, and your classmates to illuminate our subject.

### Digital Course Reader

The course reader is not one you will buy. Instead, you will “build” on the bCourses resources already gathered by compiling a number of articles and handouts as we read them and keeping them in an organized fashion. Some of these will be articles will be handed out in class, while most will be in the “Modules” folder on bCourses.berkeley.edu.

With each article on bCourses, please bring a laptop/tablet or print out a hardcopy to read -- and either way, **annotate** the article with your notes on what might be useful. Bring those annotated notes with you to class on the day we discuss the reading (often this will already be our bCourses Discussions Forum work).

### Supplies and Materials

- **Laptop/tablet** -- since the work that we do is largely digital, having access to a laptop or tablet will be very helpful. That said, a notebook/pen plus a smartphone can work well if you do not have access to a laptop. I can also provide a departmental laptop; feel free to ask in advance if you need one.
- An **active email** account *that you check regularly*
- Regular access to the class **bCourses** page (<http://bcourses.berkeley.edu>)
- Active use of a **good online grammar/usage/citation/style guide for finding and documenting sources**, such as Diana Hacker's Research & Documentation site: [http://content.bfwpub.com/webroot\\_pubcontent/Content/BCS\\_2/ReWriting\\_basics%202e/re-writingbasics2e/resdoc5e/index.htm](http://content.bfwpub.com/webroot_pubcontent/Content/BCS_2/ReWriting_basics%202e/re-writingbasics2e/resdoc5e/index.htm)
- 1 **multi-pocket portfolio** to store all printed out drafts, notes, and feedback. You'll be glad later if you make a habit of saving everything during the semester.
- **Some means of electronically backing up all of your written work** separate from your computer (your free cloud-based Google bDrive, or a usb jump-drive, works well). Seriously: back up all written work, and do it compulsively. Every semester a student loses a major chunk of their work.
- **Printer** (optional). Consider getting one of your own. The shared printers at the computer lab will fail you precisely when you need them most.

**Getting Support Beyond Academics (Food, Housing, Finances, Counseling, etc.)**

While my primary focus is on your work in this course, I recognize that the few hours we'll spend together each week don't happen in a vacuum, and that other stressors in life can affect your performance and focus. If you're needing support in addition to academic services, whether help with food, housing, counseling, or other matters, please don't hesitate to ask me for direction. For an overview of just a few of the resources available to you on campus, check out the link on our bCourses page under the "Course Syllabus, Policies, and Places to Get Help" module. And, again, please ask me!

### **Class bCourses Site**

We have a course page on [bCourses.berkeley.edu](https://bCourses.berkeley.edu). Among other things, this is where you'll find electronic copies of this syllabus, the major essay assignments, links to some of the readings and handouts, and regular course announcements, including up-to-date schedules for what's due each day in class.

**Regular bCourses Submissions:** You'll regularly submit links to individual blog entries with your ongoing writing, findings, and more through bCourses. Look in the individual Assignments for the link on the top right called 'Submit Assignment.' (Also a note: be sure to check your Berkeley.edu email regularly, since any official communications from me sent to the whole class through bCourses will come to your Berkeley account unless you've arranged to forward that account to one you use more regularly.)

**bCourses Discussions:** This will be a forum for us to share interesting information we find online, to ask questions, to start discussions, or to participate in existing discussions.

As the course goes along, when you find information (about writing, reading, research, course themes, strange and interesting current events, or even silly but fascinating memes) that you want to share and link us to, or if you have questions or comments that you think the class would find useful or interesting, you can **post it in Discussions**.

**Also, making regular contributions to online Discussions can be a way of bolstering your participation grade. You will be assigned to lead a new discussion or to comment on an existing one at least once a week.** (See the description under "Grading" and "Participation" below.)

### **On The Writing Process, Drafts, and Late Papers**

This course emphasizes the importance of writing as a process (thus the use of the term "recursive" in the Course Overview above). This means, in part, that you'll be writing drafts of each of your major papers, planning and writing in stages, thus leaving yourself room for discovery, re-thinking, revision, and editing. This is more than simply a way to prevent procrastination; this is the way successful writers go about writing.

Failure to turn in preliminary drafts of your three major essays on the days assigned will hurt your final grade, both for that essay and for the course (see “Grading” below). Also, unless you have arranged otherwise with me because of truly extenuating circumstances, essays turned in late will be marked down by one-third for each class day that they are late. The final paper/research project, which is due shortly after the last day of class (see “Course Schedule”) and constitutes the final exam for the course, may not be turned in late.

### **Reading**

We will focus on quality reading—which means reading closely and re-reading and taking notes. You must complete the required reading before you come to class each day.

You’ll be expected to respond to everything you read—either in writing or in discussion, or very likely both—so failure to come to class having completed the reading not only means that you’ll be unprepared, it will also hurt your grade (not to mention the quality of our class discussions).

### **Attendance**

Regular and on-time attendance is expected. Your success in this course depends on your actively being here in both body and mind. ***If you miss more than three classes, your grade will be seriously compromised, potentially putting yourself at risk of failing the course. If you repeatedly come late or leave early or nod off, the same will be true.***

Stay organized and caffeinated (or sugar-boosted or well-rested or whatever it takes to stay on the ball). Also, to be clear, attendance is not the same as getting credit for participation. Attendance is a prerequisite for participation. (See more in the grading section below.) Please treat this course like you would a job; even if you’ve overslept, **always email me if you can’t make it and make sure you catch up on work you’ve missed.**

### **Plagiarism Policy**

The College Writing Programs has a zero-tolerance policy regarding plagiarism. If I discover that you’ve plagiarized, there will be severe sanctions, ranging from an “F” on that assignment to being dismissed from the University. The Center for Student Conduct has produced a comprehensive guide to academic honesty. For fuller detail, please see this web site: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/faculty-staff/violations> . The following excerpt from that document outlines the elements of plagiarism:

*Plagiarism is defined as use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source, for example:*

*\*Wholesale copying of passages from works of others into your homework, essay, term paper, or dissertation without acknowledgment.*

*\*Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment.*

*\*Paraphrasing another person's characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device without acknowledgment.*

### **Electronics Policy**

I encourage focused, task-based use of laptops and tablets in the classroom. The default is our course texts, notebooks and pen. Mobile phones will always be put away and on silent mode, unless I specifically ask you to take pictures of your written work on the board.

### **Accommodations**

If you require any special accommodations and/or are working with the Disabled Students' Program, please speak with me as soon as possible in the semester so that we can make adjustments.

### **On the Use of Your Writing in Class**

I often find it useful to look at samples of student writing, both current and past, when we think we all can learn something from it. If I save any of your work from this term to use in future classes because your writing is particularly helpful in this regard, I will not add any information on the writing that identifies it as yours; whenever possible, it simply will be an anonymous example that we will use as a teaching aid. Once I've given you this syllabus, the assumption is that you agree to my potentially using your work in this fashion this term or in the future unless you specifically tell me otherwise.

### **Grading Overview**

You will earn a certain number of points for every assignment you turn in, as well as for things such as active participation in class, contributions to our Discussions site, turning in your assignments on time, and so forth.

A note: I do not grade on a curve. You are not competing against each other; you are focusing on your own work and doing the best that you can. (If anything, you'll be trying to help each other through peer reviews and the like.) If everyone's effort and the quality of the work you produce merits an "A," then there will be 17 "A's". Or there could be none. I try to judge everyone's work by as objective a standard as possible, and not merely against the other people who are in the same class.

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### **Grading (The Breakdown)**

Here, further specified, is a little more about each of those portions of your grade:

**Participation, Peer Review, Blog Entries, Discussion Forums, Workshopping**

This includes demonstrating through class discussions (both in class and online), peer reviews, blog entry writing, and your approach to the course generally that you have completed the reading and writing assignments for each day's class, and that you are genuinely engaged in the process of your own learning.

An "A" would be earned by someone who was (almost) never absent or late, who participated steadily and usefully in class discussions, not only responding to my questions but raising points and responding to points made by other students (i.e. truly engaging in discussion rather than merely teacher-student discourse), and who diligently applied themselves in small group work, brought insight and new evidence to online discussions, and offered useful help to classmates.

This latter portion would partly be reflected in the quality and detail of the written comments offered in various peer responses. Also, a student earning an A in this portion is likely to have been a proactive contributor our course's Discussions site, starting a discussion thread or commenting more than once a week.

A "B" in this category would be someone who participates somewhat less—some days speaking, some days not—but who is clearly attending to what is going on, writes a solid amount in the Discussions and blog entries, and who makes an effort to put their best foot forward in small group work. A "C" (or lower) student would speak rarely or not speak at all, and would make an adequate, if somewhat cursory, effort in small group work as well as online. Attendance might also be a problem.

**Major Projects: Grading Rubric for Major Projects**

These are the standards we use in grading projects. We cannot assign grades based on effort or the amount of time you spend writing an essay, but only on the piece of writing you submit for a grade.

**A:** An A project is excellent (though not perfect) in every way. The essay is insightful and grapples with interesting, complex ideas. Evidence is well-chosen and explored in a way that reveals the main ideas in support of the thesis. The essay enhances the texts under analysis and ideas discussed in class. It does not merely repeat them. The introduction creates a complex relationship between context, the writer's approach to the topic, and the thesis. The conclusion is more than a summary. The language is clear, precise and engaging.

**B:** A B project aims high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and developed with critical engagement, but some require more analysis; parts of the essay do not seem to fit with the thesis; evidence may not be sufficiently explored; context is lacking. These features require me to make the connections or transitions that the writer should have made clear. Some errors in grammar or problems with syntax may be present, but they do not interfere with the meaning the writer is conveying.

Sometimes a B essay will achieve all of its aims, but may contain rather routine reasoning. It is an essay that does not reach as high as the A, its limitation being conceptual.

**C:** A C project has problems in one of the following areas: conception (the main idea is vague or presented in a way that is hard to understand); structure (confusing); use of evidence (weak—the connections among the ideas and evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or add up to platitudes or generalizations); language (sentences are awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions). The essay is repetitive, or it touches upon several ideas, but does not develop them sufficiently. Problems with punctuation, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may exist.

Sometimes a C essay is written without major problems but is summary rather than analysis.

**D or F:** These projects may be extremely problematic in several of the areas mentioned above: conception (the writer's understanding of the texts or subject may be inaccurate, skewed, or illogical); evidence (unpersuasive, counterproductive, minimal); structure (erratic or overly mechanical); language (imprecise or repetitive word choice; minimal sentence variety; major errors in grammar and usage; other errors that obscure the meaning the writer is trying to convey). Or they do not come close to addressing the expectations of the assignment. Any writer receiving a D or F should talk to me about the possibility of revising, unless the grade was assigned because of plagiarism. In such case, the grade will stand (as described under the "Plagiarism Policy" above).

*Note: This rubric draws heavily on rubrics used by The College Writing Programs at U.C. Berkeley and by the Harvard Writing Project.*

### **Office Hours**

If you have a question or concern that you'd like to discuss, by all means drop by my office hours. If office hours aren't convenient for your schedule (or if they're taken by other students), please feel free to see me about setting up an appointment at an alternative day and time. Email is the best way of contacting me with quick questions, but for more in-depth discussions, nothing beats face-to-face conferences.