

WRITING 10 — READING & COMPOSITION

Section 002: TR 10:00–11:50, Kolligian Library 371, CRN 1098

Instructor: Dr. Tom Hothem

Email: tehothem@gmail.com or thothem@ucmerced.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30–3:00, Wednesday 3:00–4:30, & by appointment

Office: TBA (perhaps under a nice tree somewhere on campus, at a likely table near or in a local café, in one of the Kolligian Library breakout rooms, and/or online in our UCMCROPS class site’s chat room [see <https://ucmcrops.ucmerced.edu/portal>])

“Writing Positions”

CLASS DESCRIPTION (from the UC-Merced Catalogue): *“Development of college-level skills in effective use of language, analysis and argumentation, organization and strategies for creation, revision and editing. Prerequisite: Satisfaction of the UC Entry Level Writing Requirement Examination.”*

In emphasizing argument, this course is geared toward refining your ability to write for specific purposes and selected audiences. Most students are familiar with legal arguments as represented in television and movies; however, in this class you will learn significantly different modes of argument that are distinctive to academic reasoning. Academic problems tend to have no right or wrong solutions, such that writing about them entails convincing readers that you understand the issues (including other efforts to address them) and recognize the significance of your opinions. To this end, we will learn to analyze the elements of argument and to assemble theses that synthesize your point of view. You will ask questions about thesis statements that lead to other questions, and you may become bewildered or even angry when your presumptions are challenged. Academic argument evolves from such messy work—much harder intellectual work than you have likely attempted before. That said, this course will train you to think for yourself, challenge you to understand the relativity of perspective, and require you to ask questions that have no simple answers. By teaching you to think critically, this course will also prepare you for every other course you will take in college.

This particular manifestation of Writing 10 will focus on the concept of environment in the broadest sense, so as to explore the concept of position with respect to argument. We’ll examine places, theorize the idea of place, derive a reflexive sense of perspective, and apply it to the places we occupy in our academic, professional and personal lives. Thinking about writing environmentally will allow us to gauge our relationship to our surroundings, our backgrounds, our education, and our futures. Along the way, we’ll focus on the process of composition (e.g., invention, drafting, revising and finalizing), learn where to look for ideas, and practice how to develop, structure, and present them persuasively and attractively. In order to raise our awareness about the language we use every day—i.e., the linguistic environment we inhabit—often we’ll write about each other’s writing and our own.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES. By term's end you'll be better able to:

- Synthesize and express complex ideas
- Argue for different rhetorical purposes: to persuade, explain, cooperate, refute, etc.
- Understand problems in current and historical contexts
- Understand issues from opposing or complementary perspectives
- Provide helpful, supportive evaluations of peers' writing
- Revise writing by incorporating relevant advice for changes
- Collaborate successfully on group tasks and class projects
- Support your classmates as members of the same learning community

COURSE PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES:

Over the course of term, you will have composed about eight thousand words of formal and informal writing, and will collect the following in a COMPREHENSIVE PORTFOLIO that will be collected and assessed at the end of term (be sure not to lose any of your work):

1. Writing Projects. These will be described in handouts throughout term, and will entail your own critical thinking, close reading, and thesis-building and -sustaining. They will include a place description, a critical observation, a position paper, a critical autobiography, a narrative analysis, and a reflective essay. **Unless otherwise specified, writing projects are double-spaced (with block quotations single-spaced), in hard copy, observe MLA style, written in 12-point type, have one-inch margins, and include titles.** They will be assessed points according to the following categories: (1) **Creativity** (innovation, originality, spirit, style); (2) **Analysis** (linguistic critique, engagement, depth); (3) **Coherence** (rational organization, thematically-arranged content, transition); (4) **Mechanics** (grammar, spelling, formal organization, fluidity); (5) **Purpose** (justification, awareness, commitment). A veritable treasure trove of information about essay writing appears at <http://cai.ucdavis.edu/trc/trcdefault.html>; I'll also share my world famous "Zany Miscellany of Essay Wisdom" and "Hardcore Revision Regimen." Submit essays late at your own peril: I reserve the right to grade late work on my own time and without commenting on it.

2. Class Exercises. These can take various forms, usually to get you thinking about what you've read/written, and will include response papers, workshopping, peer review, freewriting, quizzes, discussion facilitation, and oral presentations. If I feel you aren't keeping up with the reading, I reserve the right to give graded pop quizzes.

3. Journals. As part of your portfolio, at the beginning and end of each class—and also at other times outside of class—you will write reflective journal summaries in a notebook that you keep. These can address goals or foci for each class session, ideas you entertain during class, your participation in that day's activities, and/or anything else pertaining to your writing and reading, in and out of class. Journal entries allow you to reflect on what you've learned or to speculate about information that might augment your learning. Substantive, thoughtful entries will help you to cultivate awareness of your educational experience, and as such to become a better writer. They can also serve as preliminary drafts of your essays.

CLASS PARTICIPATION. Please come to class prepared to share your ideas. Be assured that no question is necessarily a bad one, and that we need to ask “bad questions” to learn. Because this course subscribes to a workshop format, you cannot satisfy its requirements unless you attend regularly and on time. Hence **I will keep track of attendance, and will dock you five points for each absence that exceeds the allowable four (4) unexcused absences.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility on your own time to find out what you’ve missed.

In respecting each other’s opinions, we will cultivate a classroom environment that fosters communal learning. Accordingly, please turn off your cell phones, keep off the Internet (unless instructed otherwise), stay focused on class discussions and activities, and recognize that your peers are also your partners in this learning community.

Class participation will also entail peer review, in-class computing exercises, as well as virtual participation on our **UCM course site via UCMCROPS** (see <https://ucmcrops.ucmerced.edu/portal>).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. Plagiarism is an issue that is as complicated as linguistic expression is nuanced. Though we will occasionally discuss it conceptually and consider it in relation to the semantics of writing, for our purposes plagiarism entails passing off another’s work as your own. Note that plagiarism includes:

- submitting work that is done in part by someone else
- paraphrasing or summarizing any source without referencing it
- copying any source without using quotation marks or block indentation

In sum, if you submit your own work—i.e., you don’t include text that is not your own without also noting the source—you will avoid all serious types of plagiarism. Please do not insult me, your classmates, this university, and above all yourself, by plagiarizing. I consult online search engines and identification services if I suspect plagiarism. And I’ve the uncanny ability to remember individual student essays over the course of many terms (because I appreciate your writing and treat it very seriously), so I can spot recycled work a mile away. I reserve the right to fail plagiarized work and to assign plagiarists failing grades for the course. If you have any questions about plagiarism, feel free to ask me or to consult <http://www.library.ucla.edu/b Bruinsuccess>. For further information about academic integrity, see <http://cai.ucdavis.edu/aip.html>.

GRADING. Grades will be awarded at term’s end according to the following **schedule of points accumulated** (out of 200 total points): A=185-200 (93-100%); A–=179-184 (90-92%); B+=173-178 (87-89%); B=165-72 (83-86%); B–=159-164 (80-82%); C+=153-158 (77-79%); C=145-152 (73-76%); C–=139-144 (70-72%); D=119-138 (60-69%); F=<119 (< 60%). **Assignments:** WP#1 (Place Description) = 20 points (10% of grade); WP#2 (Critical Observation) = 25 pts (12.5%); WP#3 (Position Paper) = 25 pts (12.5%); WP#4 (Critical Autobiography) = 30 pts (15%); WP#5 (Narrative Analysis) = 30 pts (15%); Portfolio (with at least two essays revised) = 40 pts (20%; 10 pts each for reflective essay, 2 revisions, and overall improvement); Class Contribution & Academic Activity (15 pts for journal, 8 for participation, 7 for peer review) = 30 pts (15%).

Time Management and Good Academic Habits. For each hour of class, you should anticipate doing at least two hours of “homework.” Writing and thinking are processes, so dedicate some time each day to this course. Take it from me: do not procrastinate. Although we will cover some study skills in class, ask me about good scholarly habits any time you like.

Writing Resources. If you would like further help with your writing—whether you’re experiencing difficulties or polishing up an essay—sign up for free consultations at the Student Advising and Learning Center (SALC) in Kolligian Library 172 (visit the center online at <http://learning.ucmerced.edu>). I also encourage you to come to office hours with any questions you have about assignments, to get feedback on your writing, or to discuss your progress in the course. If you cannot attend office hours, we can schedule an appointment for another time.

MATERIALS (because our scrutiny of language will be of utmost importance, you must have a copy of the reading with you in class):

1. Textbooks =

- Yogi, Stan, ed. Highway 99: A Literary Journey Through California’s Great Central Valley. Berkeley: Heyday, 1996.
- Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz, eds. Everything’s An Argument. 3rd edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004.
- Cather, Willa. My Ántonia. 1918. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

2. A thorough yet economical dictionary and thesaurus. Without these, I feel like a fish out of water—and I’m a professor! Dictionaries are keys to the most sophisticated tool you’ll ever use (i.e., language). Thesauri enrich your vocabulary by cueing you in to alternative words.

3. A guide to grammar, style, and/or citation. There are many from which to choose (I can recommend **Ann Raimés’s Keys for Writers**). Try Barnes & Noble (in the Merced Marketplace, near the corner of Austin and West Olive Avenues), or online (for instance, <http://www.amazon.com> or <http://www.bookfinder.com>).

4. A nice pen, and a portable notepad. First, the notepad. Inspiration can strike at any moment, so I like to be prepared with the paper to capture it. Now for the pen. These days, many of us compose and revise right on the computer. That’s fine; I myself do it. And most writing you’ll bring to class is to be typewritten. But I also find that, because writing is about transforming one’s thoughts into living words, drafting or note-taking the “old fashioned way,” with pen on paper, can be a liberating experience. I especially like to use fountain pens, which are essentially living things—they need regular exercise and maintenance to keep flowing, lest they dry up. And the feel of the nib now gliding across the paper, now biting into it, dramatizes the very genesis and industry of idea formation. In this digital age, when it’s easy to feel disembodied, I feel I owe as much of my writerly development to word processing as to the fountain pen. However you approach your writing, indulge your creative (and emotional) faculties to free up your intellectual ones.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change, depending on redirections en route; **H99 = Highway 99**; **EAA = Everything's An Argument**)

9/6 Introductions, syllabus review, and diagnostic essay.

9/8 Introductions continued. Discuss diagnostic essay and consider adjusting syllabus to address specific needs. Recognizing Place, and Varieties of Knowledge: Lopez, “The American Geographies”; Stilgoe, “Beginnings” (handouts).

9/13 What does it mean to write about place? Some place descriptions: Smith, from Southwest Expedition (H99 7-9); Derby, from Report of the Tulare Valley (H99 10-12); Brewer, from Up and Down California (H99 18-23); Muir, from The Bee-Pastures (H99 25-29); Snyder, “Covers the Ground” (H99 30-31); Moulton, “Atwater: Watching B-52’s Coming in to Castle,” “Visiting Mussel Slough Looking at Stones and Clouds” (H99 337-39).

9/15 Some more place descriptions: Steinbeck, from The Harvest Gypsies (H99 60-63); Galarza, from “Barrio Boy” (H99 44-52); Saroyan, “Fresno” (H99 74-79). Begin workshopping WP#1 (Place Description).

9/20 WP#1 (Place Description) workshopped.

9/22 **WP#1 (Place Description) due.** Strategies for Reading Place Descriptions: On the Art of Perspective. Quickly review EAA Chapter 1, “Everything’s An Argument” (3-26), and Chapter 2, “Reading and Writing Arguments” (27-50).

9/27 On Reading Place Descriptions—A Miscellany of Poems About the Weather: Everson, “San Joaquin,” “The Rain on that Morning,” “The Ruin,” “Fog” (H99 89-90); Kherdian, “It Becomes This for Me” (H99 183); Kelly-Dewitt, “Yuba City Orchards, 1961,” “February Heat” (H99 245-46); Thompson, “Medusa” (H99 247); Janzen, “Sometimes,” “Toward the End of the Century” (H99 248-49); Everwine, “Back from the Fields,” “The Hatch” (H99 250-51); Minasian, “Early Summer Through Los Banos,” “How Foolish the Sweating Men” (H99 252-53); Rail, “Pickers,” “The Field” (H99 254-55); Soto, “Hoeing,” “Harvest” (H99 258); Coelho, “Evening Comes Slow to a Fieldhand” (H99 259); Rose, “November: San Joaquin Valley,” “Thanksgiving on the San Joaquin Daily Between Fresno and Martinez” (H99 311-13).

9/29 On Reading Place Descriptions—People and Place: Austin, “The Walking Woman” (H99 37-43); Masumoto, “FireDance” (H99 80-88); Schmitz, “The California Phrasebook” (H99 186-88); Montoya, “Gabby Took the 99” (H99 216-17); Salazar, “The Reincarnation of the Commonplace” (H99 356-57); Vasquez, “Belief” (H99 302).

10/4 On Reading Place Descriptions—Our Class and Place. Review EAA Chapter 14, “Figurative Language and Argument” (285-300). WP#2 (Critical Observation) workshopped.

10/6 WP#2 (Critical Observation) workshopped. Review EAA Chapter 10, “Evaluations” (174-204).

10/11 WP#2 (Critical Observation) workshopped.

10/13 WP#2 (Critical Observation) Due. Argument Analysis/Placing Ourselves—“Targeted Tales”: “The Man and the Owls” (a Yokuts tale; H99 1); Houston, “In Search of Oildorado” (262-77); Haslam, “Oildale” (H99 286-92); Barich, “Prison Valley” (H99 343-46).

10/18 Argument Analysis/Placing Ourselves—Some California Conundrums: [Readings TBA]; Review EAA Chapter 8, “Structuring Arguments” (121-46).

10/20 WP#3 (Position Paper) workshopped. Review EAA Chapter 19, “Fallacies of Argument” (384-400), and Chapter 21, “Evaluating and Using Sources” (412-23).

10/25 WP#3 (Position Paper) workshopped.

10/27 WP#3 (Position Paper) due. Memoirs of Place: Weinschenk, “Madera” (91-98); Kingston, from The American Father (H99 121-27); Didion, “Notes from a Native Daughter” (H99 189-98).

11/1 Memoirs of Place continued. Rodriguez, from Nothing Lasts a Hundred Years (H99 199-212); Soto, “Like Mexicans” (H99 297-300).

11/3 Memoirs of Place continued. Readings TBA.

11/8 WP#4 (Critical Autobiography) workshopped.

11/10 WP#4 (Critical Autobiography) workshopped.

11/15 WP#4 (Critical Autobiography) due. Cather, My Ántonia. Introduction and Book I (1-90).

11/17 Cather, My Ántonia. Introduction and Book I (1-90) continued.

11/22 Revision workshop.

11/24 **Thanksgiving; class will not meet.**

- 11/29** Cather, My Ántonia. Book II (93-161).
- 12/1** Cather, My Ántonia. Books III & IV (165-207).
- 12/6** Cather, My Ántonia. Book V & Appendix (211-44). WP#5 (Narrative Analysis) workshopped.
- 12/8** WP#5 (Narrative Analysis) workshopped. WP#5 due by 6PM on 12/9.
- 12/13** Preparing the Portfolio: Some Final Considerations About Revision.
- 12/15** Course Evaluations; Outro.

Complete portfolios due no later than 6PM, 12/16.

Tom Hothem's Writing 10

PLACE OBSERVATION PROJECT (Writing Projects 1 & 2)

Through two pieces of writing—one descriptive, the other evaluative—we'll explore the ways in which we perceive our immediate environment in language. This exercise is designed to get you comfortable with your writing, with critiquing others' and your own, and with generating awareness, depth and engagement in your written analyses.

WP#1 — Place Description. For Thursday, 9/15, and Tuesday, 9/20 (2-3 page draft for workshopping), and Thursday, 9/22 (3-5 page final draft), write an essay in which you closely describe a unique environment with which you are familiar. Exploit your creativity and powers of expression to the utmost. Be as innovative and focused as possible, so that you generate a sustained look at a particular aspect of your surroundings. Don't diffuse your description by moving from subject to subject without reflecting deeply. Try to find fresh insight into places we might take for granted. Draw upon our readings for inspiration. **Do your best to craft a narrative that allows you to focus, elaborate, and sustain your description.**

WP#2 — Critical Observation. For Tuesday, 10/4, Thursday, 10/6, and Tuesday 10/11 (2-3 page draft for workshopping), and Thursday, 10/13 (3-5 page final draft), write a critical appreciation/observation of a place description (or of more than one). Critical appreciation is the art of engaging your subject as closely and genuinely as possible by carefully considering it, attending to it, and demonstrating that you've listened to all its nuances while elaborating your perspective. It is a kind of intellectual empathy that informs most writing. **Look closely and carefully at your description(s). Entertain phrasings, images, themes, characteristics, ideas, qualities, etc., and collect your observations under the rubric of an overarching thesis about the way in which the place is described (find ways to relate your observations to one another, and allow these relations to dictate your theme and organization). Be sure to quote and engage the language, so as to demonstrate your reading.**

Questions you might pursue: What do you see? What is unique about the description? What's there? What's not there? How would you characterize the description or certain aspects of it? How might you have described such a place, and what might any discrepancies say about your author's (or authors') description(s)? Do you relate, or have similar impressions? Or do your impressions differ? Whatever the case, consider your own perspective of such a place, look closely at the language in which your writer(s) describe(s) it, and use your essay to identify its unique attributes (avoid jumping to conclusions about the author him-/herself without relating them to the linguistic evidence). Again, to **demonstrate your engagement, include various samples of the writing in your essay: quote phrases, sentences and passages and show how they illustrate your response.**