

Land of the Free: Liberty, Justice, and Imprisonment in the United States
Writing 101: Academic Writing
Professor Matt Whitt

A profound tension runs through the public culture of the United States. On the one hand, the U.S. declares itself to be a “land of liberty,” in which individual freedom is cherished and protected. On the other hand, the U.S. has historically denied freedom to large sections of its population, and today it imprisons more people per capita than any other nation. What do we make of this? How do we reconcile the ideals of liberty affirmed by U.S. public culture with the realities of bondage and imprisonment that shape U.S. society?

In this class, we will use political theory, philosophy, and academic writing to explore this important issue. Writing is an especially deft tool for examining the apparent disconnect between political ideals and social realities. Effective writing demands that we clarify our thoughts, evaluate our commitments, and genuinely consider opposing views. In your own writing, you will connect philosophical theories of individual freedom, punishment, and justice to concrete issues of imprisonment, policing, and legal reform. This work will help you see how seemingly abstract ideals can have tangible and weighty impact in the real world.

In the first half of the course, we will examine philosophical theories of liberty and punishment, focusing on when, how, and why the state should be able to deprive individuals of their liberty in response to a crime. Through brief blog posts, students will evaluate these theories in connection to current events surrounding policing, criminal justice, and imprisonment. This half of the course culminates in a formal analytic essay, which students will draft and revise several times, gaining feedback from their peers, their instructor, and a writing tutor.

In the second half of the course, we will examine incarceration in more detail, with emphasis on the use of solitary confinement within prisons, and the disparate racial impact of policing in the United States. Students will construct an independent research project that explores, in great detail, any theme of the course that interests them. A series of workshops, peer review, and revisions will culminate in a final seminar paper suitable for publication in print or online.

I am especially excited to offer this course this semester, because you will have a chance to talk with visiting experts on race and policing, sexuality and imprisonment, and social justice. In order to delve deeper into these issues, you will be strongly encouraged to attend at least one outside lecture relevant to our course. Details below.

Objectives

The course has five main objectives, which reflect the aims of all WR 101 courses:

- Students will learn to engage the thoughts of others in charitable, critical, and self-reflective ways.
- Students will learn to carefully and confidently take a position in conversation and writing.
- Students will situate their writing in specific contexts.
- Students will transfer their writing knowledge into situations beyond this course.
- Students will develop open-ended inquiries and practice setting intellectual goals.

We will pursue these objectives through:

- research;
- workshopping;
- revising;
- editing; and
- sharing our work.

Expectations

This seminar is based around open discussion and student writing, which means that we are *all* directly responsible for the quality of the course. I expect you to actively prepare for and attend each class, complete readings on time, turn in projects when due, and participate fully in class workshops. Throughout the semester, you will challenge yourselves, each other, and me, and I expect you to do so reflectively and respectfully. This means open and collective inquiry, without intimidation or under-informed sermonizing (viz.: bullshitting).

This course examines very difficult aspects of U.S. history and contemporary society, and it asks philosophical questions about issues such as racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and inequality. Some of the readings and discussions are likely to make us *uncomfortable*. I want to alert you to that now, and suggest that discomfort is essential to thinking critically about society and our place in it. I hope that you will take on that discomfort as you wrestle with the questions posed by our class. However, if you feel unable to do this, let me know so that we can discuss alternative ways to engage the material. It is our collective responsibility to make the classroom a safe space for difficult conversations and brave thinking.

Class Texts

All readings will be posted to Sakai. You are free to annotate them digitally or in hardcopy, but you *must print a hardcopy of every reading* to use in class. Special exceptions aside, you will not be able to use a laptop in class (and never a tablet or phone), so you must have a hardcopy. If you do not have a hardcopy text for class, I may ask you to leave and mark you as absent. I suggest you keep a binder of all of the readings and your notes.

Major projects

You will practice writing in a variety of forms. Although specific guidelines will be distributed with project assignments, this overview will help you plan your semester.

1. Blog Posts (Four posts, 250-500 words each)

Over the course of the semester, you will submit *four* thoughtful blog posts in response to assigned readings. In your posts, you will situate the reading in relation to other class texts, practice close interpretations, thoughtfully connect the reading to current events, and/or raise critical questions. Think of the posts as ways to intelligently ‘digest’ the readings and prepare for class discussion. I recommend drafting your posts as soon as you have finished the reading, before your thoughts fade.

Posts 1 and 2 are to be completed by 2/3. You may write posts 1 and 2 on any of the readings assigned in in Weeks 1-4. However, each post is due *before the start of class* on the day the corresponding reading is due. For instance, if you want to write a post on Isaiah Berlin, your post is due before class on 1/22. If you want to submit a post on 1/27, it must be on Philip Pettit.

Posts 3 and 4 correspond to specific authors. Post 3 responds to the Michelle Alexander readings, and is due before class on 2/24 or 2/26. Post 4 responds to the Vesla Weaver texts, and is due before class on 3/2 or 3/4.

This gives you some flexibility to fit your blog posts into your own schedule. However, since unexpected obstacles can arise, do not wait until the last opportunities to write your posts.

Since the blog is meant to extend our conversation in directions that *you* choose, you are expected to occasionally respond to each others’ posts. To facilitate this, you should quickly skim some of your peers’ posts (unless, of course, yours is the first one!), and include links when your claims overlap or contrast. Whenever you respond directly to a peer’s post, be sure to treat him or her like any other author, by providing a link and a citation.

Blog posts will be graded on an A-F grade scale. An exceptional (A or A-) post will:

- make detailed argumentative claims or raise significant critical questions about the reading
- connect the reading to current events or ongoing class discussions, using links or reference citations
- be clearly and carefully written, original, and respectful of interlocutors and readers

2. Blog Comments (Three comments, 1+ paragraph each)

You are expected to read your peers’ blog posts and to respond to them in your own posts. Additionally, over the course of the semester, you are required to leave *three* thoughtful comments on peers’ posts. Comments should be at least a paragraph in length, and should respond to a specific claim or question in your peer’s post. Moreover, they should be original; you can refer to existing comments, but do not repeat them. You are expected to raise new insights and questions in your comments

Comments 1 and 2 are due by 2/12. Comment 3 is due by 3/4.

3. Extra credit events (At least one 90-minute event outside of class, 2/25 or 4/14)

You are strongly encouraged to attend *at least one* of the “Mass Incarceration and the Carceral State” events this semester, because they explore our class themes in depth and give you a chance to engage experts face-to-face. Reserve time in your calendar *now*, so that you do not forget when the semester gets busy.

-2/25, evening time TBA: Prof. Regina Kunzel on imprisonment and sexuality

-4/14, evening time TBA: Prof. Vesla Weaver on race, policing, and citizenship

-A third event may be held on 4/8; stay tuned for details!

At each event, take notes on the content of the lecture, and also the ways the speaker presents his or her claims (including evidence, framing, presuppositions, etc.). Students who attend these events are encouraged to write extra credit blog posts critically reviewing the lecture and tying it to class discussions. If you want credit, *be sure* to say hello to me at the event, so I can mark you present. Extra credit blog posts are due no later than one week after the event, and each post is worth *up to 2%* added to your final grade, for a maximum of +4%.

4. Paper 1 Project: (4-6 page final draft and revision memo due 2/21 at 12:00pm via Sakai; rough drafts due via Sakai on 2/08 and 2/15, for commenting).

The first half of the semester culminates in a formal academic essay, in which you critically engage two or more of the readings from Weeks 1-4. A prompt will be assigned a month in advance, on 1/22. This essay will require you to push your thinking further than the blog posts, and will enable you to practice specific writing techniques that we discuss in class in Weeks 4-6.

On 2/08, you will submit a complete draft of your paper. Half of the class will meet with an undergraduate writing tutor (UWT) who will give you face-to-face feedback on your draft. The other half of the class will receive written comments from me. On 2/15, you will submit a second complete draft. Students who previously got feedback from me will meet with the UWT; students who previously met with the UWT will get comments from me.

5. Paper 2 Project: (8-10 pages, due 5/2, with *many* intermediate assignments. See below.)

During Weeks 9-16, our class will be entirely dedicated to supporting your second paper project, a research paper of your own design, exploring any class theme that interests you. Through this work, you will become an expert on a particular topic related to freedom, justice, and imprisonment.

To orient your project, an initial **project statement** is due in class on 3/9. In Weeks 9 and 11, you will conduct independent research, submitting an **annotated bibliography** on 3/25. Immediately afterwards, on 3/30, you will develop a rough plan of your paper’s structure in class. A first **partial draft** is due on 4/6, and a second, more complete **partial draft** is due on 4/13. During Weeks 13 and 14, you will meet with the UWT to discuss your draft in detail, and class time will be devoted to improving your draft. A **complete and careful rough draft** is due on 4/19 at 9:00pm. This draft should be *as complete and well written as possible*.

In class on Friday, 4/22, your draft will receive a thorough and valuable **peer critique** from two classmates, and you will provide extensive feedback on two of your peers' drafts as well. To prepare for this, class time on Wednesday, 4/20, will be devoted to working on the peer critique assignment. Note that this assignment requires about *three hours* of work between classes, due in class on 4/22.

After our peer critique workshop on 4/22, you will revise the draft once more, submitting a **final draft by 9:00am on Monday, 5/2**. Here again, you will be surprised by how much better you write when you write for others, revising in light of their feedback.

This is a lot of work, and a lot to remember. You will receive prompts for each assignment, but record due dates in your calendars now. Doing the work when required, thoughtfully and carefully, will bring you success in this class; waiting until the last minute or neglecting assignments will trip you up.

6. End of semester reflection: (1-2 pages, written in class on 4/28)

This final, brief assignment will ask you to reflect back on your progress throughout the semester, and set goals for future semesters at Duke.

Class and University Policies

Readings and Materials: The reading assignments are listed on the schedule below. For any assignment, be sure you read carefully before class, and bring your notes and questions to class—these will be the bases of your class participation! You may read and annotate on screen or on hardcopy, but you must bring hardcopies to class with you on the relevant days. Please use double-sided printing if possible. Always bring paper and pen/pencil to class.

Tip: We will not usually 'review' the basics of the readings in class. Instead, class discussion and activities will presume that you have carefully read the assignments. Class will be boring and confusing if you do not do the readings. On the other hand, if you prepare well and bring questions about the readings to class, you will be able to steer the discussion toward your own interests!

Laptops and cellphones: Laptops, phones, and other electronic devices are not necessary for our work, and are highly distracting to many students. We will discuss computer use in the first week and develop a policy together. This however is non-negotiable: Anyone distracted by email/the internet/text messages/etc. during class will be asked to leave, and will be considered absent.

Respect and integrity: This class requires that you follow Duke's Community Standard, remembering that it entails acting honorably and cultivating an environment of integrity. To do this, we will all respect one another in and outside of class, engage in open and collaborative inquiry, and give credit to one another—as well as to other scholars and sources—for the ideas that stimulate our thinking and writing. A productive seminar requires that we all are comfortable speaking our mind while being sensitive to others. If for any reason you feel this is not the case, contact me immediately.

In addition to respecting one another's views, show respect by coming to class on time, preparing for discussions, not leaving class except when absolutely necessary (and then doing so quietly), and being aware of others who wish to speak.

Duke University, the Writing Program, and I all take intellectual honesty very seriously. As members of the Duke community, you are expected to do so as well. Any instances of cheating or plagiarism will lead, *at minimum*, to a score of 0% on the assignment in question, a 0% final participation grade, and additional disciplinary action through the Office of Student Conduct and your Dean. In many cases, plagiarism leads to failure in the class, and potentially to suspension or expulsion from Duke.

Plagiarism is the representation of the thoughts or words of another as one's own effort; do not pass off the work of others as your own. I expect you to work proactively to prevent this from happening by appropriately documenting the sources of your quotes, paraphrases, projects and ideas—even in your drafts. None of us thinks or writes in a vacuum, so we need to learn how to give credit where it is due. This class will teach you how.

Tip: Always provide a reference for information or phrases that you gain from a source; citing well-chosen sources is an admirable skill, so do not hesitate to do so! If you have any questions about this, ask me *before* you turn in your assignment.

Tip: When taking notes, especially when researching, include the citation information *in your notes*. That way you will not accidentally confuse your hastily scribbled notes on a source for your own brilliant thoughts. We will discuss other ways to make citation easy and natural in class.

For more on the Duke Community Standard, see: <http://www.integrity.duke.edu/ugrad/student.html>
For more ways to avoid plagiarism, see: <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/index.html>
If you have questions, ask me *before you turn in your assignment*.

Attendance and participation: *Prepared* class attendance is presumed and is essential for a good course. Read closely and come to every meeting, on time, with questions, interpretations, connections, and counter-arguments about the reading.

Please note that we usually *do a lot* in class, including peer review, writing workshops, and graded writing. Because of this, missing class will be detrimental to your success in the course.

Because unexpected difficulties may arise throughout the semester, you have two 'free' absences (including STINF absences) built into the course. **Each additional absence (beyond two) will result in the lowering of your final grade by 3%.** I will only make exceptions in situations where your Dean or academic advisor has informed me of a legitimate emergency affecting your attendance at Duke. Do not use your two 'free' absences intentionally or casually—they are for instances when unforeseen events, such as illness, prevent you from coming to class.

Please note that this policy is designed to let *you* decide if you can attend class, and when/why you must be absent. You need not excuse yourself for your two free absences, although I do want to be informed if you are having trouble with the course or your academic work in general.

Frequent or excessive tardiness (more than 15 minutes) will count as absences, although I will consider legitimate excuses immediately after class or, ideally, ahead of time.

Turning in papers: Because this class focuses on writing development, it is crucial to submit papers on time, in order to prepare for the next draft, workshop, or peer review. For this reason, **any paper turned in more than ten minutes late will receive half credit.** In cases of legitimate and documented emergencies, I will grant brief extensions if notified *in advance*. Should such occasions arise, please have your academic adviser or Dean notify me.

When assignments are due online, please submit them in .doc or .docx (MS Word) format, using the following convention for filenames: *LastnameDraft#.doc*. Please put your last name first in the filename. If I cannot open your file, I cannot grade your work.

Every assignment for this class must be submitted, on time or otherwise. Not doing so will result in an incomplete for the course. Save all of your work until the course is completed! You will need to review your work for your final Progress and Goals Memo.

Style and format: All written assignments are required to be typed in 12pt Times/Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-1.25 inch margins. Page limits are firm. Please include your name and page numbers. Our citation format is the Chicago Manual style, using footnotes. Guidelines for Chicago style references can be found here (bookmark it!):

http://www.du.edu/writing/media/documents/chicago_notes_16th.pdf

Feedback, help, and office hours: I strongly encourage students to attend office hours or make an appointment for a face-to-face meeting in order to ask questions, air concerns, give feedback, and receive guidance on assignments. Meetings work better than extended email correspondence. This semester, my drop-in office hours are:

During those hours, you do not need to make an appointment (but check your email for possible cancellations). Outside of those hours, I am frequently available for one-on-one or group conferences. To make an appointment, please send me an email with a topic/question and *three possible meeting times* between 11am and 4:30pm in a range of upcoming dates. I may take 24-36 hours to respond to email; please bear that in mind when proposing possible times/dates.

Throughout the semester, please let me know if you have questions or trouble understanding the assignments. I can be reached by email, which I check about twice a day during working hours (7:00am-4:30pm). Please do not expect quick email answers to questions just before an assignment is due, nor after-hours or weekend responses.

Disabilities and accommodation: If you feel that you may need an accommodation of some sort this semester based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Also, you should contact the Student Disabilities Access Office to find out more about the resources available on campus: <http://www.access.duke.edu/students/requesting/index.php>

Undergraduate Writing Tutors (UWTs): Our class has been paired with an undergraduate writing tutor, who will provide in-depth feedback on student writing. Students will meet with the UWT *twice* during the semester, one time for each paper project. These meetings are mandatory, and are an extremely helpful way to improve your writing before submitting a final draft for grading! You will schedule meetings with the UWT yourself, through the system we discuss in class.

Many students prefer to meet with their UWT early on in a writing project, to get a boost in the early stages of planning and drafting their paper. Because early feedback can be especially helpful, I strongly encourage you to schedule your UWT meetings early in each ‘window’. You will receive more details about this early in the semester.

Additional Resources: I encourage you to stay up-to-date with the issues and interests that drew you to this class. We will be making connections between your work at Duke, academia in general, and wider social and political communities. Thus, following issues of concern via news sites, blogs, etc. may be beneficial to you. Occasionally I will email you with links to interesting or relevant articles which have come to my attention – unless specified these articles are optional reading.

There are a number of excellent resources at Duke to assist with the researching, referencing, revising, and editing processes. The librarians at both libraries can help tremendously with research, and the tutors at the Writing Studio can help with all aspects of the writing process. These are not ‘remedial’ resources; they are helpful to students of all levels.

More information about the libraries here: <http://library.duke.edu>

More information about the Writing Studio here: <http://twp.duke.edu/writing-studio>

Information for English as a Foreign Language students here:
http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/twp-support-for-esl-students-fall-2013.original.pdf

Grades: Duke recognizes the rights of instructors to assign the grades that they determine to be legitimate, and grade changes are only permitted in very rare instances of miscalculation. I will not consider any requests to change grades unless the student meets with me and provides a written hardcopy request, including full rationale for the requested change. That said, I am happy to discuss assignments, your work, my feedback, and my criteria for grading with *all* students.

Your final grade for this course will be composed as follows:

Blog Activity:	15% of final grade
Posts (4):	2%; 3%; 3%; 4% (A-F scale)
Responses (3):	1% each x 3 (√, √-, 0 scale)
Paper 1 Project	25%
Rough draft submitted to me:	3% (√, √-, 0)
Final draft:	20% (A-F scale)
Revision memo w/ final draft:	2% (√, √-, 0)
Paper 2 Project	56%
Project Statement	4% (A-F scale)
Annotated Bibliography	10% (A-F scale)
Progress Update 1 (11/10)	1% (√, √-, 0)
In class self-assessment (11/10)	1% (√, √-, 0)
Progress Update 2 (11/17)	1% (√, √-, 0)
In class self-assessment (11/17)	1% (√, √-, 0)
Peer critique assignment	3% (√, √-, 0)
Final draft	35% (A-F scale)
End of semester reflection	2% (√, √-, 0)
Preparation and Participation	2% (A-F scale)
Absences	3% subtracted for every absence after two
Extra Credit Possibilities	up to 4% added to final grade
Extra blog post on 2/25 event	up to 2% added
Extra blog post on 4/14 event	up to 2% added

(There may be a 4/8 event, but the total maximum extra credit remains +4%)

Reading and Workshop Schedule
(subject to slight changes if necessary)
(all readings posted to Sakai)

Week 1

Fri, 1/15: Introductions; class and syllabus overview

Week 2

Wed, 1/20: Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (1998), pp. 29-45
Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro" (1852)

(Readings are always due by class time. Read carefully, take notes, and supplement those with the notes you take in class—you will need them when it comes time to write a paper. Come to class prepared with questions about the reading. Finally, consider writing a blog post and reading what your peers have written on the blog. You must complete posts on two readings by 2/3, and two comments on your peers' posts by 2/12. A second round of posts and responses will be due in weeks 7-9.)

Fri, 1/22: Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1969)

Week 3

Wed, 1/27: Philip Pettit, "Freedom as Antipower" (1996)
Paper 1 assigned via Sakai.

Fri, 1/29: Thom Brooks, *Punishment* (2013)
pp. 1-6; 15-20, 34; 35-42, 49-50; 51-55, 62-3; 64-9; 85

Week 4

Wed, 2/3: Five Omar Mualimm-ak, "Solitary Confinement's Invisible Scars" (2013)
Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement* (2013), pp. 161-7, 221-230, 244-251

(Blog check: By class time today, students should have written *two* blog posts corresponding to *two* different readings, due before class on the days the readings were due. By 2/12, students should have written two comments on peers' posts.)

Fri, 2/5: No assigned reading.
For class: Begin outlining and drafting your paper
In class: Rough planning workshop

Week 5

Mon, 2/08: [No class] **Paper 1 Draft 1 due** by 12pm via Sakai
Group A students begin UWT meetings.
Group B students will receive written feedback from me by Thursday evening.

Wed, 2/10: No assigned reading.
In class: Thesis revision workshop. Bring drafts.

Fri, 2/12: **Class cancelled:** Revise drafts for resubmission on Monday.
(**Blog check:** Students should have written two comments on peers' blog posts.)

Week 6

Mon, 2/15: [No class] **Paper 1 Draft 2 due** by 12pm via Sakai
Group A students will receive written feedback from me.
Group B students begin UWT meetings.

Wed, 2/17: In class: Paragraphing workshop. Bring drafts.

Fri, 2/19: In-class: Using sources workshop. Bring drafts.

Week 7

Sun, 2/21: [No class] **Paper 1 Final Draft due, with revision memo,** by 12pm via Sakai

Wed, 2/24: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2012), pp. 1-15, 72-103

Thurs, 2/25: [No class] **Extra Credit Event: Regina Kunzel**
Students are encouraged to attend Dr. Kunzel's lecture and write an extra credit blog post about the lecture.

Fri, 2/26: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2012), pp. 140-165, 178-187, 236-244.
(**Blog check:** By class time, students should have written *one* post on Alexander.)
Paper 2 project statement assigned via Sakai.

Week 8

Wed, 3/2: Vesla Weaver, "The Only Government I Know"

Fri, 3/4: Vesla Weaver and Amy Lerman, *Arresting Citizenship* (pages to be determined)
(**Blog check:** By class time, students should have written *one* post on Weaver/Lerman.)

Week 9

Wed, 3/9: **Paper 2 project statement due** in class in hard copy.
Class meets in Lily Library to learn research techniques
Begin independent research!

Fri, 3/11: **Class cancelled.** Continue independent research.
(**Blog check:** By 5:00pm, students should have written *a third* response on a peers' post)

Week 10: Spring Break

Wed, 3/16: [No class!]

Fri, 3/18: [No class!]

Week 11:

Wed, 3/23: For class: Continue independent research.
Bring *one* bibliography source to present to the class.
Source should be fully read and annotated.
Bring laptops.

Fri, 3/25: **Annotated Bibliographies due** by 8:00pm via Sakai.
For class: Bring *another* bibliography source to present to the class.
Source should be fully read and annotated.
Bring laptops.
Volunteers needed for Wed and Fri workshops.

(Blog check: By class time, students should have written *a third* response on a peers' post)

Week 12

Wed, 3/30: In class: Paper rough planning workshop. Bring all paper materials!
(Students are encouraged to begin drafting their papers immediately after class.)
(Schedule UWT meetings now.)

Fri, 4/1: For class: Continue drafting paper. Focus on *rough* drafting!
In class: Paper drafting workshop and writing time.

Week 13:

Mon, 4/4: [No class] **UWT meetings begin** and continue through Week 13 and 14.
(Do not postpone UWT meetings! Earlier is better!)

Wed, 4/6: **Paper 2 partial draft 1 due** via Sakai by class time.
[Need volunteers to submit drafts early for workshop]
In class: Paper 2 Self-Assessment 1; draft workshop

Fri, 4/8: In class: Draft workshop.

Week 14

Wed, 4/13: **Paper 2 partial draft 2 due** via Sakai by class time.
UWT meetings continue.
[Need volunteers to submit drafts early for workshop]
In class: Paper 2 Self-Assessment 2; draft workshop
(Note: schedule may change to accommodate workshop with Vesla Weaver)

Thurs: 4/14: [No class] **Extra Credit Event: Vesla Weaver**
Students are encouraged to attend Dr. Weaver's lecture and write an extra credit blog post about the lecture.

Fri: 4/15: In class: Workshop to be determined.
Peer critique assignment assigned.

Week 15

Tues, 4/19: [No class] **Paper 2 full draft due** to group members and me by 9:00pm via email

Wed, 4/20: In class: Peer critique assignment.
(In class, you should be able to finish about 1/3 of the assignment due Friday)

Fri, 4/22: **Peer critique assignment due.**
Bring annotated hard copies of both peer drafts, and your two feedback forms.
In class: Peer critique workshop.

(Students are encouraged to begin revising papers immediately after class.)

Week 16

Wed, 4/27: Final class; no assigned reading
In class: End of semester reflection. Bring laptops.
Course evaluations

Thurs, 4/28: Last day I am available for paper questions via meetings or email.

Monday, 5/2: [No class.] **Paper 2 due via Sakai at 9:00am.**
Writing 101 is complete!