Writing I (WRIT-1-36)
Syllabus, Spring 2003

General information
Meeting times: MW, 5–6:45 pm, Social Sciences 2, room 141
Instructor: Chris Potts Office hours: Tues., 12:30–1:30 pm
cgpotts@ucsc.edu Thurs., 1:30–2:30 pm
Stevenson 263 and by appointment
459-4874
Course website: [http://people.ucsc.edu/~cgpotts/](http://people.ucsc.edu/~cgpotts/)
Writing program website: [http://humwww.ucsc.edu/writing/](http://humwww.ucsc.edu/writing/)

Basic course description
Human languages are among the most complex and amazing systems in the universe, and they are central to just about everything that we do. As a result, some of our finest literature is about language, and our most heated and significant public debates often concern linguistic issues. In this course, we’ll read texts by writers with a wide range of perspectives on language and the controversies that surround it, with the aim of getting a firmer grip on what language is and how we relate to it. We’ll also use these texts as models for how to construct our own essays, mining them for effective strategies and styles. The main writing assignments will be a writer’s autobiography and several essays inspired, directly or indirectly, by our texts and the linguistic issues that surround them. Much of the coursework will be devoted to the process of developing these essays, through informal personal pieces and critical responses to our texts. We’ll take advantage of each other’s unique perspectives and opinions by working in small writing groups while drafting and revising.

Texts


— **Required**: Various articles available on electronic reserve at McHenry (follow the link for electronic reserves (ERs) at the library website, or the link from this course’s website, or go directly to [http://eres.ucsc.edu/](http://eres.ucsc.edu/))

— **Required**: Various articles available via links from the course website

Requirements

1. Writing (all papers must be typed, with one inch margins, in twelve point type):
   i. Writer’s Autobiography (4–6 pages)
   ii. Paper One (4–6 pages): “We’d like you to contribute to our encyclopedia. . .”
   iii. Paper Two (5–7 pages): Language and the University
   iv. Paper Three (5–7 pages): Language and society
   v. Daily writing assignments (free-writing, comments upon your peers’ papers, responses to our readings, etc.)

2. Other requirements
   i. At least two meetings with the instructor, the first during the week of April 21, the second during the week of May 19
   ii. Active and engaged participation in class discussions and activities (More than two unexcused absences can easily result in a no-pass.)

Daily schedule

I offer only highlights. We are unlikely to stick with this plan for long. But I will do my best not to change the due dates for the major papers and their drafts.

Wednesday, April 2

— Course themes, practical matters

— A brief introduction to linguistics and its relevance to this course

— Free-writing in response to the questions on the Writer’s Autobiography assignment, in preparation for the writing assignment

— Assignment A draft of the Writer’s Autobiography for next time

— Reading From Language Awareness: Malcolm X (p. 63–66); Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (p. 150–153); William Zinsser (p. 155–158); from Style: Chapter 1, ‘Causes’ (p. 1–17)

Monday, April 7 (rough draft of the Writer’s Autobiography due)

— The basics of incorporating insights and ideas from others’ works into your own

— Discussion of the linguistics in Chapter 1 of Style

— Assignment Finalize your Writer’s Autobiography, by sharpening the prose as best you can and adding references to, and some discussion of, at least one of the assigned reading pieces. Submit your rough draft along with the final version.
Wednesday, April 9 (final version of Writer’s Autobiography due)

— Questions: What is grammar? What is a grammar? What is a grammatical mistake?

— Review of the Paper 1 topic, with a look at some sample linguistics encyclopedia entries

— **Assignment**  A rough draft of Paper 1; *bring four copies with you to class on Monday* (one for you, one for Chris, one for each of the others in your group).


Monday, April 14 (rough draft of Paper 1 due)

— Discussion of the structure and tone of Nunberg’s commentary and of Seymour’s anecdotal piece: What do they share? What sets them apart? How do they affect us differently?

— Exchange of Paper 1 rough drafts in small groups; formulate three questions that you would most like your peer readers to answer for you about your rough draft of Paper 1.

— **Assignment**  Read your peers’ Paper 1 rough drafts and prepare answers to the questions they asked.

— **Reading**  From *Language Awareness*: Ken Parish Perkins (p. 365–367), plus ‘Ebonics discussion’ (p. 368–369); Deborah Tannen (p. 278–291); Nathan Cobb (p. 295–299); John Leo (p. 481–486)

Wednesday, April 16

— Working with the rough drafts in groups

— Discussion of the various tones and styles represented in the Tannen, Perkins, and Cobb readings: Which most resembles the tone of your draft?

— **Assignment**  Begin incorporating your peer readers’ insights into your Paper 1 draft.

— **Reading**  Entries for the term grammar from David Crystal’s *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* and the online LSA Fields of Linguistics (linked from the course website or found directly at http://www.lsadc.org/web2/fldfr.htm)

Monday, April 21

— Topics in English grammar suggested by the rough drafts

— Preparation for library visit

— **Reading**  From *Style*: Chapter 2, ‘Clarity’, and Chapter 3, ‘Cohesion’
--- Assignment --- Formulate three topics that you would like to cover in your meeting with Chris.

**Wednesday, April 23 (library visit: meet at McHenry)**

--- Assignment --- Final version of Paper 1 due next time; submit the rough draft along with it.

**Monday, April 28 (final version of Paper 1 due)**

--- Discussion of research techniques, scholarly citation, and bibliographic conventions ---

--- Introduction to the topic of Paper 2 ---

--- In-class writing: Select a topic from the list on the Paper 2 assignment, and then imagine that you need to justify the choice to yourself. Why are you well-positioned to write about this topic? Do you have experiences that bear on the topic? Are you simply intrigued, eager to know more? ---

Note: It is fine to get to the end of this process having decided that you should choose a different topic. This writing doesn’t commit you to anything.


**Wednesday, April 30**

--- Discussion of Wallace’s piece: His style is unusual and provocative. What works and what doesn’t? (That is, what can we learn from him about how to write in this vein?) ---

--- In-class reading: A look at a parody ---

--- In-class writing: A parody of Wallace’s style or a letter to the editor of Harper’s responding to Wallace’s piece ---

--- Assignment --- A rough draft of Paper 2; *bring four copies to class on Monday*, for working in small groups.

**Monday, May 5 (rough draft of Paper 2 due)**

--- Exchange drafts with peer readers and complete a ‘Reader’s Response to Article’ sheet for each. ---

--- Assignment --- A second draft of Paper 2 for next time; *bring four copies to class*. ---

Wednesday, May 7 (second draft of Paper 2 due)

— Discussion of Baker’s piece: What techniques does Baker use to win the reader over?

— Exchange drafts with peer readers, and then discuss with them the extent to which their questions were answered, their concerns were met, etc.

— Assignment Final draft of Paper 2 for next time; submit the earlier drafts along with it.

— Reading From *Style*: Chapter 5, ‘Coherence I’, and Chapter 6, ‘Coherence II’

Monday, May 12 (final version of Paper 2 due)

— Introduction to the Paper 3 topic

— Brainstorm topics for Paper 3 as a group, and then in writing.

— Assignment Turn your free-writing into a proposal for the paper (at least one page).

— Assignment Locate at least two outside sources that are relevant to your topic.

Wednesday, May 14

— Topics in English grammar suggested by Paper 2

— Assignment A rough draft of Paper 3; bring four copies to class on Monday.

— Reading From *Language Awareness*: George Orwell (p. 539–550)

Monday, May 19 (rough draft of Paper 3 due)

— In-class: Your perspective on language and its interactions with society is by this time quite sophisticated. Bring your expertise to bear on Orwell’s text. Which parts of it seem basically sound? Which are outlandish, or potentially damaging, or prejudicial?

— Formulate three questions or concerns about your draft that you would like your peer readers to consider; exchange drafts and questions with your peer reviewers.

— Assignment Formulate three topics that you would like to cover in your meeting with Chris.

— Assignment Read your peers’ drafts and answer the questions that accompany them.

— Assignment Find at least two additional outside sources that help you in responding to your peers’ insights and suggestions.
Wednesday, May 21

— Read peer responses and respond to them in a free-write.

— Discussion, in the peer-reader groups, of the papers and the responses they generated

— Reading From Style: Chapter 7, ‘Concision’

— Assignment Write at least a paragraph explaining the role that your outside sources play in your Paper 3.

Monday, May 26

— In-class writing: Try to characterize the style (tone) you have adopted for your Paper 3. Why is this approach best suited to your topic?

— Exchange free-writes with peer readers.

— Assignment A second draft of Paper 3 due next time; be sure to try to mine your last assignment and your in-class free-write for ideas.

Wednesday, May 28 (second draft of Paper 3 due)

— Exchange drafts with peer readers, and then discuss with them the extent to which their questions were answered, their concerns were met, etc.

— A look at the ways that professional writers handle revisions

— Assignment An a one-page, informal essay, explain how your first and second drafts for Paper 3 differ from each other.

Monday, June 2

— Reading From Style: Chapter 9, ‘Elegance’

— Assignment Final draft of Paper 3 due next time.

— Assignment Bring to class next time your Writer’s Autobiography and Papers 1 and 2 in a folder, along with all the drafts and other writing that led up to the final versions.

Wednesday, June 4 (final version of Paper 3 due)

— In-class writing: A personal reflection on the quarter’s work, something Chris can consider carefully in writing final evaluations. Please write this piece in the third person.