Instructor: Dr. Joshua Rivkin  
Email: joshua.rivkin@utah.edu  
Course Hours: Tu/Th 10:45AM-12:05PM (Zoom via Canvas)  
Office Hours: M 11-12pm (Zoom) & by appointment

Course Description
The main objective of this course is to develop and refine your critical writing skills. The course is designed to demystify the process of researching and writing academic papers. Students will write and revise in a supportive and collaborative environment. We'll consider examples of clear, analytical, engaging writing as well as best practices for research. We will cover concepts and strategies including invention, audience, purpose and focus, drafting, organization, style, library research, and writing essays. An important emphasis will be placed on the process of writing as well as self-reflection. Equally important will be our focus on reading. To be a successful writer, one must be a good reader. The critical skills of being able to summarize and analyze and synthesize and argue with challenging texts is fundamental to being a successful writer in any discipline.

Course Goals
By the end of this course, students will:
-understand the basics of academic writing and research
-improve their ability to write clearly and persuasively
-improve their ability to recognize and evaluate academic arguments
-improve skills of analysis and critique of written work
-engage in peer-review workshops
-develop oral presentation skills
-use personal experience as a basis for written reflection

Required Texts
zeitoun, Dave Eggers  
Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, Matthew Desmond  
Understanding Style: Practical Ways to Improve Your Writing, Joe Glasser  
The Craft of Research, Wayne Booth  
They Say, I Say – Graff and Birkenstein

Course Grading
Weekly Assignments 25%  
Essay #1 20%  
Essay #2 20%  
Research Presentation 25%  
Craft Presentation 5%  
Essay #3 5%
**GRADING SCALE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100 – 94%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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Note: For final grades, I grade up if your score is .5 or higher. For example, if you have a 93.5%, I would grade you up to an “A”. If your score is .4 of lower, I do not grade up. That means if you have a 93.4%, you receive an “A-”.

All major assignments must be handed in on time. Assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments will not be accepted more than 48 hours late.

**Class Participation**

This is a discussion based course. There are no shortcuts to engagement with our texts in an ongoing way. Every class is an ongoing experiment, a chance to try new things. This class is no exception. We will have Zoom meetings every Tuesday and Thursday; at our scheduled class time, 10:45AM-12:05PM, which you are expected to attend.

If you miss class, you are responsible for the covered material. You will need to watch the recording and write a short response to the conversation. We will use Zoom to discuss texts and dig deeper into course related material. No points will be awarded for in-class participation, but coming to our Zoom meetings will definitely help you, so please come!

In addition to our Zoom class, you should plan on logging onto Canvas at least x3 a week. Get in the habit of logging in at regular times so you do not miss any important information.

**Weekly Assignments**

Each week, you will have assignments due for this class.

Why?
The point of the weekly assignments is to incentivize close reading, to provide a venue for reflection on our texts and the questions they raise, and to thereby promote learning outcomes. The assignments are also a way to build conversation between students and to critically examine arguments and ideas.

How do I know what is due and when? Every week, go to Canvas and take a look at your weekly assignments before you do the required reading. Sometimes you will be asked to participate in a group discussion. Entries in “Discussions” are always public. You also may be required to read at least one other student’s post and write a brief comment on it. Sometimes you will be asked to complete quizzes, reading/reflection questions, and so on. I also sometimes assign collective work—i.e., work that you do together with classmates—on apps such as Perusal, which allow us to annotate texts together. Instructions for each submission are available on Canvas. Each assignment has its own unique
specifications.

When are assignments due?
Check Canvas for details. The rule is this: shorter assignments are due on Tuesday and/or Thursday at 10am.

I built in a 5-minute window to assignments due at 10am, so you have until 10:05am to submit. After the window closes, you will not be able to submit and will need to get in touch with me to open the assignment. I give extensions for any good reason, including illness and work-related responsibilities.

**Major Assignments**

**Essay #1**
*Zeitoun* in Conversation
5 pages

An important skill as writer is being able to put texts and ideas in conversation with each other. One way to do this is to read one text through the 'lens' of another. This essay is a chance to do that with the aim of sharpening both your interpretive and critical reading/writing skills. In this essay you will put the book *Zeitoun* in conversation with the scholarly article “Still Up on The Roof: Race, Victimology, and the Response to Hurricane Katrina” by Kenneth B. Nunn. What is the relationship between the texts? Competing narratives? Complementary narratives? Non-comparable? A successful essay will include a clear and focused argument about the relationship between the two texts and how these different works illuminate each other.

Rough Draft for In-Class Workshop: 9/28
Final Draft Due: 10/6
Revision: 12/1

**Essay #2**
Research Essay on *Evicted*
5 pages

Have you ever noticed that academic and monographs are usually filled with footnotes. This essay will help you understand why and how, by carefully reading the text and these notes, you can look for clues about the larger conversations and argumentative landscape.

You will explore and analyze a scholarly conversation in the book *Evicted* by taking one (or two) pages of the footnotes and finding 3-4 sources Desmond quotes. At least 2 of them must be scholarly articles or books. Track down each of these sources and annotate/read them. We'll discuss best practices, including how to quickly read academic monographs and longer sources.

The next step of this assignment will be to write an essay (4-5 pages) in which you present how Desmond's ideas fit within these other sources. What is the relationship between these sources and Desmond's text? How do his arguments compete or coincide with the claims of the sources? The short paper is a chance to practice your research skills, your skills of summary and analysis, and
understanding the nature of scholarly conversations and debates.

Library Skills Session: 10/13
Rough Draft for In-Class Workshop: 10/27
Final Draft Due: 10/29
Revision: 12/1

Presentations on the Craft of Writing

Over the course of the class, beginning in Week 4, pairs of students will present on a topic of their choosing based on ideas and exercises in our three craft books: Understanding Style, The Craft of Research, or They Say, I Say. These short presentations should be 5 min and be followed by a 5-7 min. writing exercise or activity. As a group you should present an idea from one of the texts – or another of your own choosing – providing specific examples that will allow your classmates to understand these ideas and concepts in practice. The exercises can be created by the groups or taken directly from the texts or created by the students. The topic of the presentation must be approved at least 10 days in advance and the slides / presentation format and exercise must be shared at least a week before presenting.

Sign up in Week 2

Research Presentation

This is the capstone project of our class, a bringing together of the skills you've been developing all semester from developing a research question to writing a clear and original thesis to using sources. The presentation will have several parts including preparatory and reflective work including a project proposal in which you describe your research question and an annotated bibliography with at least 5 scholarly sources.

The subject of the research and presentation will emerge from the core themes of the course, themes that occur across the two primary course texts:

Natural and Social Disasters
Responses to Injustice
Protest and Reform
Xenophobia, Sexism, and Racism
Outsider Experiences
Militarization of Police and Incarceration

This list is just a start and we'll think together on others as the class progresses. The recorded presentation must include a powerpoint (or acceptable alternative) that is no more than 10 minutes and shared on Canvas and watched ahead of class.

Project Proposal: 11/5
Annotated Bibliography: TBD
A 10 min Q&A during our Zoom session will follow.
Due: November 15
Essay #3
Final Personal Essay Reflection

In this essay (2-3 pages) you will reflect on the course themes and ideas within your own life and experience. In this first person “I” essay you do not have to conduct new research but should draw on the work you’ve done for your other assignments. Your essay should have a thesis although probably not a thesis statement. In addition to your own thoughts, attitudes and experiences, feel free to cite any of the reading you have done for this class. This essay will require insight on your part. You are encouraged to “dig deep,” to examine your attitudes and actions, the significant challenges you may have faced and what you might do differently if you could. You may want to consider how you have grown personally or academically and what made that growth possible. Be honest with yourself and the reader. While a reflective essay is necessarily about past experiences, your conclusions should emphasize their potential effects on the future.

Due: December 1

Library

Over the course of the semester there will be 2 virtual library sessions. It is essential that you attend these sessions as they will allow you to successfully complete the research for the presentations.

University & Course Policies

Academic Honesty: All work submitted for this class must be your own and written for this class. All work must be original for this class and not a recycling or revision of a project or essay from a previous class or assignment. With instructor permission you can build on an assignment from previous course.

Anyone caught cheating during a test will have the test confiscated, a zero will be given to the work, and the student's action will be reported to the Dean. Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the University's Code of Conduct as it pertains to plagiarism: http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html. When you draw upon any source (class notes, an article, a website, a textbook, etc.), you must cite that source whether you are quoting from it directly or only paraphrasing it. The basic idea here is that you can draw on someone else's idea(s), but you cannot claim someone else's idea(s) as your own. Evidence of plagiarism will be assigned a zero, and the student's action will be reported to the Dean.

Accommodations: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

University Safety Statement: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-
COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

**Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

**COVID-19 Campus Guidelines.**
Students are required to self-report if they test positive for COVID-19. To report, please contact: COVID-19 Central @ The U 801-213-2874 coronavirus.utah.edu

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 on campus, face coverings are required in all in-person classes for both students and faculty. Based on CDC guidelines, the University requires everyone to wear face coverings in shared public spaces on campus. If you repeatedly fail to wear a face covering in class, you may be referred to the Dean of Students for a possible violation of the Student Code.

Some courses may require attendance due to hands-on coursework. Please read the syllabus and attendance requirements for the course thoroughly.

Some students may qualify for accommodations & exemptions from these guidelines through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accommodations should be obtained prior to the first day of class.

If you believe you meet these criteria, contact:
Center for Disability & Access
801-581-5020
disability.utah.edu
162 Union Building
200 S. Central Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

**Learning Styles:** Your wellbeing and success in this course are important to me. I recognize that there are *multiple* ways to learn and that this multiplicity should be acknowledged in the design and structure of university courses and the evaluation of their participants. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with me during my online office hours or, if necessary, at another arranged time. Every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience.

**Email Policy:** I am available by email to answer course-related questions. You can request a meeting for any reason! Just email me and let me know. Please give me at least 24 hours to respond to your message. Please use the greeting “Dear Dr. Rivkin” when emailing me.

**Respect and Inclusion:** I aim to create a community that is inclusive and collaborative. I require
each student is polite and respectful of each other, even when confronted with conflicting points of view. Our conversations, especially around highly charged subjects like race and gender, may not always be easy; it is my expectation that each member of our community, including myself, will listen and respond to each other with patience and care and respect. My hope is these difficult conversations deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives – whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or positions.
Schedule
(The daily class schedule may change. Assignments and due dates also may be modified as necessary. Pay close attention to in-class announcements and online updates (on Canvas). Specific readings will be assigned throughout the semester and will include readings outside the required texts. Readings should be completed by our first meeting each week unless otherwise specified.

Week One
Tu 8/25:
Introductions, Community
Writing as Process
Lydia Davis, “Revising One Sentence”

Th 8/27:
Close Reading
George Orwell, “Why I Write”
Joan Didion, “Why I Write”
Terry Tempest Williams, “Why I Write”
*They Say, I Say*, Chapter 2 & 3: Summarizing and Quoting

Week Two
Tu 9/1:
Paris Review Interview Exercise
*They Say, I Say* – “Entering Class Discussion”
“The Storm” Documentary:
https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/

Th 9/3:
“Snakes and Ladders” and “Of Levees and Prisons” from *Unfathomable City*
“Predatory Reading” and *They Say, I Say* – Ch 1 & 2

Week Three
Tu 9/8:
Zeitoun, 1 - 60
Exercises from *Understanding Style*

Th 9/10:
Zeitoun, 60 - 91

Week Four
Tu 9/15:
Zeitoun
Part II, 83 - 179
Exercises from *Understanding Style*

Th 9/17:
Zeitoun
Part III, 183 - 215
“Still Up On the Roof” – Kenneth Nunn
Week Five
Tu 9/22: Zeitoun
Part IV, 215 – 303
Exercises from Understanding Style

Th 9/24: Zeitoun
Part V 303 – 335

Week Six
Tu 9/29: Zeitoun Essay #1, in class workshop

Th 10/1: Zeitoun Essay #1, in class workshop

Week Seven
Tu 10/6: Evicted: Prologue

Zeitoun – Essay #1 Due

Th 10/8: Evicted: Ch 1-3

Watch: “Race: Power of an Illusion -- Housing”
https://vimeo.com/133506632

Listen: In the Thick Podcast: “Legacy of Redlining”
https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/in-the-thick/e/58884945

Week Eight
Tu 10/13:
Evicted Ch 7, 8, and 9
Library Session #1

Th 10/15:
Evicted Ch 10 and 11

Week Nine
Tu 10/20:
Evicted Ch 23 and 24
Readings from Craft of Research

Th 10/22:
Evicted - Epilogue
Readings from Craft of Research
Week Ten
Tu 10/27:
The Big Short and Owned: A Tale of Two Americas
Research / Writing Workshop – Evicted Essay

Owned: A Tale of Two Americas – The Dark History Behind the US Housing Economy

Th 10/29:
Research / Writing Workshop – Evicted Essay
Evicted Essay Due

Week Eleven
Tu 11/4:
In class exercises / writing & research time
Library Session #2

Th 11/5:
Research Presentation Proposals Due
Conferences

Week Twelve
Tu 11/10:
In class exercises / Essay Writing in Class
Readings from The Craft of Research and Understanding Style

Th 11/12:
TBD

Week Thirteen
Tu 11/17:
Research Presentations

Th 11/19:
Research Presentations

Week Fourteen
Tu 11/24:
“Stranger in the Village” – James Baldwin
“The Weight of James Arthur Baldwin” – Rachel Kaadzi Ghansh
“Black Bodies – Rereading “Stranger in the Village” – Teju Cole

Th 11/26:
No Class – Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen
Tu 12/1
Revisions of Essay #1 and #2 Due
Final Essay Due