Instructor: Dr. Joshua Rivkin
Email: joshua.rivkin@utah.edu
Course Hours: MoWeFr / 09:40AM-10:30AM, MHC 1206A
Office Hours: MoWe / 1:30 PM - 2:30PM, by appointment
Zoom (Office): https://utah.zoom.us/j/8647394773

Course Description
The main objective of this course is to develop and refine your critical writing skills. The course is designed to help you understand the process of researching and writing academic papers for college courses. 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

Selected essays, articles, videos, and handouts will be posted on Canvas and through the library. You can get either the physical texts or ebooks, though my strong preference is that you get the physical books. Whatever form you choose, you need to be able to bring the text to class.

Course Grading
Attendance and Participation 10%
Shorter Weekly Assignments 20%
Essay #1 20%
Essay #2 20%
Research Presentation / Essay 20%
Craft of Writing Presentation 5%
Essay #3 5%

GRADING SCALE

A (100 – 94%)  
A- (93% - 90%)  
B+ (89% - 88%)  
B (87 – 84%)  
B- (83%-80%)  
C+ (79%-78%)  
C (77% -74%)  
C- (73%-70%)  
D+ (69%-68%)

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

Your participation in classroom discussions is essential to your success in this class. Your physical presence isn't enough. You must also be an active member of the classroom community. Attendance is expected and will be taken.

At the same time, in light of the ongoing pandemic, there will be flexibility for students who need to miss class because of COVID related health issues. Any of us might get sick during the semester, or be taking care of someone who is sick, or experience pandemic-related disruptions of other kinds. Please communicate with me if you know that you are sick or will not be able to participate in class for whatever reason. I want to make sure that everyone stays on track and is ready to learn. Do not come to class when you are experiencing symptoms, even if they seem minor to you.

Occasionally, and if necessary due to COVID, classes might be held virtually via Zoom. As with our in-person meetings, attendance is expected and, unless approved in advance, you must have your video on. We’ll collaborate as a class to make this possible, if necessary.

Weekly Assignments

Each week, you will have shorter writing and response assignments due for this class. 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.
Major Assignments

Essay #1
Zeitoun in Conversation

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.

Essay #2
Research Essay on Evicted

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.

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 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 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 / Essay**

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. Each 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 and Racism
- Discrimination and Equality
- Environmental Justice
- Issues Related to Fair Housing
- Outsider Experiences
- Militarization of Police
- Mass Incarceration

This list is just a start and we'll think together on others as the class progresses. In addition to the presentation, there will be additional writing components for this project we will discuss in class, including developing the presentation into a research essay.

**Essay #3**

**Final Personal Essay Reflection**

In this essay you will reflect on the course themes and ideas within your own life and experience, making connections across ideas and concepts. 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 as well as reflections on the teamwork and collaborative aspects of the course. 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. In addition to your own thoughts, attitudes and experiences, feel free to cite any of the reading or research you have done for this class.

**Library**
Over the course of the semester there will be 1-2 library sessions. It is essential that you attend these sessions as they will allow you to successfully complete the research for the presentations and essays.

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).
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.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Cell phones are prohibited during class time. Period. While tablets and computers will be allowed for readings, your phone is not acceptable for accessing course material. If an emergency occurs and a student needs to use her/his/their cell phone, please leave the classroom and deal with the emergency outside. Laptops are permitted for use during class time, but students are prohibited from accessing non-class-related websites during class. If a student is caught accessing non-class-related websites during class, that student will lose their participation points for the day. We will discuss the possibility of laptop-free zones as a class.

Email Policy: I am always available by email to answer course-related questions. 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.
COVID-19 Campus Guidelines

You can remain current with the University’s policies on COVID-19 here: https://coronavirus.utah.edu/

As of August 12, there are no requirements for proof of COVID-19 vaccination for students and faculty, and no requirements for masks and face coverings on UU campus. The University will consider vaccination requirement when the vaccine receives full FDA authorization, although if it is required, there will be personal, religious and health exemptions, as with current vaccine requirements.

University leadership has urged all faculty, students, and staff to model the vaccination, testing, and masking behaviors we want to see in our campus community. These include:
• Vaccination
• Masking indoors
• If unvaccinated, getting weekly asymptomatic coronavirus testing

**Vaccinations:** Get a COVID-19 vaccination if you have not already done so. Vaccination is proving highly effective in preventing severe COVID-19 symptoms, hospitalization and death from coronavirus. Vaccination is the single best way to stop this COVID resurgence in its tracks.
• Many in the campus community already have gotten vaccinated:
  o More than 80% of U. employees
  o Over 70% of U. students
• Visit https://alert.utah.edu/covid/vaccine or https://www.vaccines.gov/ to schedule your vaccination. Free vaccinations are available on campus.

**Masking:**
• CDC guidelines now call for everyone to wear face masks indoors.
  o Check the CDC website periodically for masking updates — https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fullyvaccinated-guidance.html
  o Treat masks like seasonal clothing (i.e. during community surges in COVID transmission, masks are strongly encouraged indoors and in close groups outside).

**Testing (if unvaccinated)**
If you are not yet vaccinated, get weekly asymptomatic coronavirus tests. This is a helpful way to protect yourself and those around you because asymptomatic individuals can unknowingly spread the coronavirus to others.
• Asymptomatic testing centers are open:
  o Online scheduling
  o Saliva test (no nasal swabs)
  o Free to all students returning to campus (required for students in University housing)
  o Visit alert.utah.edu/covid/testing

Remember: Students must self-report if they test positive for COVID-19 via this website: https://coronavirus.utah.edu/

Mental Health Resources:
Rates of burnout, anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness have noticeably increased during the pandemic. Connect with mental health resources here: https://studentaffairs.utah.edu/mental-health-resources/index.php Note that these services are available to all students – undergraduate, graduate, and professional.
Schedule *(This will change; always check Canvas for deadlines / readings)*

**WEEK 1 –**

**M:** August 23  
Introduction to Course

**W:** August 25  
George Orwell, “Why I Write”
Joan Didion, “Why I Write”
Terry Tempest Williams, “Why I Write”

**F:** August 27  
Reading Strategies
Close Reading - Concepcion, "Appendix: How to Read Philosophy"

**WEEK 2 –**

**M:** August 30  
“Snakes and Ladders” and “Louisiana Lockdown: Of Levees and Prisons” from *Unfathomable City*. (Conti..)
“The Storm” Documentary  
https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/

**W:** September 1  
“Snakes and Ladders” and “Louisiana Lockdown: Of Levees and Prisons” from *Unfathomable City*. (Conti..)  
Selected readings from *Understanding Style*

**F:** September 3  
Craft Presentation Sign-up  
Read: "The Power of Oral History as Journalism"  
Exercises from *Understanding Style*

**WEEK 3 –**

**M:** September 6 (No Class)

**W:** September 8  
*Zeitoun*, 1- 60

**F:** September 10  
Exercises from *Understanding Style*  
Read: "How to Read a Journal Article"  
Read: "Metaphors Matter- Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina"
WEEK 4 –  
**M: September 13**  
*Zeitoun*  
Part II, 83 - 179  
Read: "Disaster Mythology and Fact- Hurricane Katrina and Social Attachment"

**W: September 15**  
*Zeitoun*  
Part III, 183- 215

**F: September 17**  
“Predatory Reading”  
“Still Up On the Roof: Race, Victimology and the Response to Hurricane Katrina ” – Kenneth Nunn

WEEK 5 –  
**M: September 20**  
*Zeitoun*  
Part IV, 215 – 303

**W: September 22**  
*Zeitoun*  
Part IV, 215 – 303, continued  
Exercises from *Understanding Style*

**F: September 24**  
*Zeitoun*  
Part V, 303 – 335

WEEK 6 –  
**M: September 27**  
*Zeitoun*- Essay #1, in class workshop

**W: September 29**  
*Zeitoun*- Essay #1, in class workshop

**F: September 31**  
*Zeitoun* – Essay #1 Due *(Tentative)*

WEEK 7 –  
**M: October 4**  
*Evicted*: Prologue  
Watch: “Race: Power of an Illusion -- Housing”  
https://vimeo.com/133506632
W: October 6  
*Evicted*: Ch 1-3

F: October 8  
*Evicted*: Ch 3-6  
Readings from *Craft of Research*

Fall Break –  
M: October 11 (No Class - Fall Break)  
W: October 13 (No Class - Fall Break)  
F: October 15 (No Class - Fall Break)

WEEK 8 –  
M: October 18  
*Evicted*, Ch 7, 8 and 9

W: October 21  
*Evicted*, Ch 10 and 11

F: October 23  
Readings from *Craft of Research*

WEEK 9 –  
M: October 25  
Reading: *Evicted Ch 23 and 24*

W: October 27  
*Evicted - Epilogue*

F: October 29  
Research / Writing Workshop – Essay #2

WEEK 10 –  
M: November 1  
Library Session

W: November 3  
Research / Writing Workshop – Essay #2

F: November 5  
Research / Writing Workshop – Essay #2

WEEK 11 –
**M: November 8**
TBD / Owned: A Tale of Two Americas – The Dark History Behind the US Housing Economy
Essay #2 Due (*Tentative*)

**W: November 10**
Library Session #2

**F: November 5**
Presentation Proposals

**WEEK 12 –**

**M: November 15**
In class exercises
Readings from *The Craft of Research* and *Understanding Style*

**W: November 17**
Annotated Bibliography

**F: November 19**
In class exercises
Readings from *The Craft of Research* and *Understanding Style*

**WEEK 13 –**

**M: November 22**
Presentation Conferences

**W: November 24**
Presentation Conferences

**F: November 26 (No Class)**

**WEEK 14 –**

**M: November 30**
Research Presentations

**W: December 1**
Research Presentations

**F: December 3**
Research Presentations

**WEEK 15 –**

**M: December 6**
Course Reflection - Final Reflection Essay
W: December 8
Course Reflection - Final Reflection Essay