

# STUDIES IN WRITING



ENGL 3210: Studies in Writing | Instructor: Dr. Matthew Heard | Fall 2015 | Univ. of North Texas | TUTH 2:00PM - 3:20PM | PHYS 311

**WHAT DOES WRITING WANT?** This question offers a thematic for the ENGL 3210: Studies in Writing course because it asks us to assume, counter to our intuitions, that writing is not merely something humans do or a technology that serves our purposes. Rather, writing is something else, something with its own histories, its own beginnings, and, possibly, even its own direction for the future of human and civilization. Many approaches to writing neglect to ask this question, beginning instead with the assumption that writing is a tool for efficient communication—one that serves human purposes and bends to human will.

**BUT WHAT IF** instead of assuming that writing is ours to control, we instead approach it as a strange, perhaps even unexpected addition to our contemporary lives and habits? What happens if we refuse to agree that writing is easy, adaptable, controllable and instead spend time studying how humans have engaged with writing and what consequences this partnership has had for human existence? // **IN THIS COURSE**, we will consider these questions carefully as we read through several important texts that together provide a platform—if only a temporary one—for studying how writing has influenced human civilization. We will study ancient writing systems and early alphabets, looking at how these systems responded to the needs of specific peoples at specific times. We will also study the concept of literacy, paying careful attention to the question of how writing informs literacy and shapes the structure of literate societies. We will finally look at several texts that project a future for the study of writing, often in radical ways that depart from the culture of books and print that we have come to expect. Overall, our goal will be to allow ourselves new space to ask what writing wants, even if the answers are messy.

**“Writing and the alphabet [...] lead human beings to the parting of the ways where the very meaning of their lives, and more particularly of their civilization and social cohabitation, is at stake.”** Carlo Sini, *Ethics of Writing*

**ASSIGNMENT POLICY:** All written work needs to be typed and submitted online to our Blackboard site, with a paper copy brought to class. For all essays, include your name and the page number on the top right of each page (i.e. : Heard 1). Please also include a date and the course number (ENGL 3200). Use a text font for all essays (Times Roman or Garamond for example) at 12 points, with all one-inch (1”) margins, and double-spacing. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated by the assignment prompt

## GRADING BREAKDOWN

- 20% - Midterm Exam
- 30% - Final Exam
- 10% - Midterm Project
- 10% - Final Project
- 30% - In-Class Quizzes, Assignments, And Participation

**ENGL 3210 COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course offers a broad-based study of the intersecting social, material, political, and institutional discourses that shape the theory and practice of writing.

## COURSE MATERIALS NEEDED:

Course Reader  
(optional) illustrated guide such as Andrew Robinson, *Writing and Script* (ISBN 9780199567782)

**ODA POLICY:** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

## COURSE POLICIES:

**ABSENCE:** You have six free absences. Upon missing seven classes, you will be dropped from the course. Coming late to class or not participating in class may result in you being counted as absent.

**IN-CLASS WORK:** Quizzes and in-class assignments will often take place at the beginning of class and cannot be made-up if missed. Frequent tardiness or disruptions will affect your quiz/assignment grades.

**DISRUPTIONS:** Excessive disruptions of our class time—including talking, sleeping, texting, cell phone usage, and doing work for other classes—hurt the class atmosphere and will hurt your grade should you engage in them. Please respect the class environment by giving your classmates and me your full attention at all appropriate times.

# ENGL 3210 Reading Schedule (all readings in course reader; all subject to change)

	WK 1	25-Aug	Course Intro	27-Aug	CLODD, "Story of the Alphabet" DIRINGER, from <i>The Alphabet</i>
UNIT 1: Origins of Writing	WK 2	1-Sep	ALTMAN, from <i>Absent Voices</i> MARTIN, "Writing Systems"	3-Sep	LOGAN, "A Comparison" STROUD, "Art of Writing in Greece"
	WK 3	8-Sep	SENNER, "Theories and Myths"	10-Sep	SCHMANDT-BESSERAT, "Two Precursors"
	WK 4	15-Sep	CROSS, "Invention of the Alphabet"	17-Sep	SHLAIN, "Aleph/Bet"
	WK 5	22-Sep	MIGNOLO, "Materiality of Reading"	24-Sep	Unit 1 review
UNIT 2: Consequences of Literacy	WK 6	29-Sep	ONG, "Writing Restructures Consciousness"	1-Oct	HAVELOCK, "Alphabetic Mind"
	WK 7	6-Oct	GOODY and WATT, "Consequences of Literacy" <i>Beginning of WF for nonattendance</i>	8-Oct	SCRIBNER and COLE, "Unpackaging Literacy"
	WK 8	13-Oct	HALVERSON, "Goody and the Implosion" STREET, "A Critical Look at Walter Ong" BATSON, "Feeling Deaf and Dumb"	15-Oct	SINI, from <i>Ethics of Writing</i> **Due: Midterm Project**
	WK 9	20-Oct	SINI, from <i>Ethics of Writing</i>	22-Oct	Unit 2 Review
	WK 10	27-Oct	!! MIDTERM !!	29-Oct	DERRIDA, "Beginning of Writing" <i>Last day to drop the course</i>
UNIT 3: Towards Writing Studies	WK 11	3-Nov	DERRIDA, "Beginning of Writing"	5-Nov	DERRIDA, "Linguistics and Grammatology"
	WK 12	10-Nov	HAYLES, "Media and Materiality"	12-Nov	HAYLES, "Lexia and Perplexia"
	WK 13	17-Nov	ROTMAN, "Corporeal Writing"	19-Nov	ROTMAN, "Corporeal Writing"
	WK 14	24-Nov	Unit 3 Review	26-Nov	** THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY **
READING WEEK	WK 15	1-Dec	Project Reports	3-Dec	Project Reports **DUE: Final Project**
FINALS	WK 16			10-Dec	FINAL EXAM: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

## RUBRICS AND SCORING SYSTEMS:

For the purposes of this course, "A" work will constitute a final score of 90-100% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly-situated in time and context

"B" work will constitute a final score of 80-89.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original

"C" work will constitute a final score of 70-79.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is acceptable but limited: coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places, but ultimately lacking in organization, articulation, perception, and/or effectiveness

"D" work will constitute a final score of 60-69.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is incomplete and severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, and overall not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates

"F" work will constitute a final score of 0-59.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is unacceptable.

## PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

The UNT Policy Manual defines plagiarism as: "(a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." (18.1.11). I expect your writing in this course to be original and every use of someone else's work in your writing to be marked clearly. The consequences for plagiarism both at UNT and in this course are severe, and may include automatic failure and in some cases dismissal from the university. Don't risk it—come and talk to me about any questionable material before turning in your assignment.

## ASSIGNMENTS:

### MIDTERM PROJECT: SELLING THE ROSETTA STONE

For this project, you will make an advertisement "selling" access to one of the ancient writing systems we have studied this semester. The purpose of the assignment is to spend time thinking about the features of writing that have been important to different cultures at different times. How do these same features "sell" when they are put into the context of our contemporary culture? In addition to your advertisement, you will write a short Project Description explaining your choices for the ad in the context of class readings and discussion. DUE: Wk8 (Oct. 15); VALUE: 10% overall

### FINAL PROJECT: UN-HANDBOOK OF WRITING

For your final project, you will create a radicalized version of the traditional "handbook" of writing. Instead of building on familiar writing skills, genres, and techniques, your un-handbook will teach an alternative approach to writing based on one or more of the readings from our course. The final project will include a mock-up design of a "section" from your handbook, complete with a brief introduction. A short paper describing your choices and connecting them to the course readings is also required. You will also make a short report to the class about your project. DUE: Wk15 (Dec. 3); VALUE: 10% overall