UCLA WRITING PROGRAMS

HOW TO WRITE

Lessons from Comp 3, Lec 30, Fall 2015, University of California, Los Angeles

STARTING

Give yourself freedom and time.

Find a topic you actually care about.

Consider a creative approach.

Consider a personal perspective.

Write and write and see where you end up.

Begin from a place of not knowing and proceed toward some kind of new knowledge.

An essay is like a dinner party: Set the table, tell us what to expect. We don't want to eat too much soup if there's steak. Warn us about dessert. When it's all gonna be over?

REVISION

Take care of the reader. This is not for you. It's for us.

Make your details matter: A good chili does not include pineapple - even if a detail looks tasty, does it make the meal?

Try to enhance your credibility - be yourself, but be humble. (Perhaps)

Trust the reader. We can make connections, we *want* to make connections.

Show, don't tell. Don't tell me a sunset is beautiful, describe it, then let me make up my mind about its beauty.

How will you keep us reading? Don't give it all away in the beginning. Remember the power of pacing, the desire to find out what happens next.

Appreciate the way writing can have rhythm - vary your sentence lengths and craft short paragraphs.

Trick yourself into seeing your draft as new - print it! Email it to yourself. Change the font.

Go back and rewrite your beginning. Drive toward the end. Assert control.

THE WRITING LIFE

Read like a writer.

Think of yourself as material - you are a text!

Save your ideas, either in a notebook, in an email, or tattooed on your arm.

Make friends and discuss and read each other's work .

THE BIG PICTURE

No essay is perfect.

No essay is ever finished.

There is no one correct voice or method.

Ultimately, all we're trying to do is say something a little bit true, a little bit meaningful.

There is no history, except for the stories we choose to tell. You might *find* a story, but ultimately you must *make* that story. Do you believe it? Does anyone else? Why should we?