Required Texts/Materials
*Half the Sky*, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
The Macintosh iPad or other reader for PDF textbook

Description
The course involves reading the following: excerpts from classic works and current book-length studies, articles and essays authored by esteemed thinkers, and online posts relevant to our discussion topics. We shall also view a few video documentaries that bear upon our discussions. We will indeed discuss a great deal, since this is an integral part of the writing process; and we will write four essays in outline and rough draft as well as preparing a grammatically polished final draft.

Objectives
This course is designed to teach you the rudiments of writing as critical thinking. The Greek word *kritein* means “to judge”—and judgment requires a number of intellectual processes, such as amassing evidence, assessing its validity, examining the logical implications of said evidence, drawing a conclusion, and even expressing (and justifying) an opinion about whether that conclusion is desirable or disturbing in accord with a specific value system. Writing at this level is equivalent to mature and profound thinking. Our objective is thus not to produce X number of pages, but to achieve a high quality of writing (i.e., of thought) within however many pages emerge.

Good grammar is not an objective in itself, but of course it must be an ancillary objective to clear and logical expression. Communications whose intent is garbled by poor usage necessarily fail to transmit thoughts clearly to the audience.

Another secondary objective is the acquisition of a proficiency in using sources to build one’s case. A component of critical thinking, as just mentioned, is to gather and weigh evidence. For college-level writers, this means learning how to find and present reliable information.

Finally, the class is designed to develop your verbal skills of communication, as well. The very word “rhetoric” derives from an ancient Greek root meaning “spoken word.” Powerful writing is really nothing but effective speech transferred to paper (or screen).

Rationale
The “guts” of a good essay cannot be isolated in bottles like the results of an autopsy—not if we hope for the essay to spring to life at the end of the process. Every essay is a complex assembly whose pieces must always be considered interrelated. Terms require definition; definitions beg for examples; some examples are better than others, eliciting a comparison and contrast of their illustrative matter; comparing and contrasting will likely raise questions about cause and effect. While some essays, to be sure, do nothing but describe a scene or relate a personal experience, these papers do not thereby achieve a very deep level of critical analysis.

Good writing must also be undergirded by “good reading”—that is, by the reading of material that invites thought in one way or another. One may vehemently disagree with Machiavelli or Nietzsche or Karl Marx, but one will be brought by that disagreement to a profound statement of one’s own beliefs. Writing by celebrities or professional wags who stir smirks but cannot tackle an idea head-on wastes the time of the student charged with producing a worthy essay. Verbal discussion, likewise, contributes to written discussion. The ancient Greeks and Romans originally wrote the rhetorical handbooks from which the contemporary composition text has gleaned many of its terms in order to prime young men for speaking in the forum, law court, or senate house. Writing is a projection of speech—a better-digested version of ideas that tend to spring to the tongue before they are transmitted by the fingers.
Closely connected to the importance of reading is the importance of the subject read about (or discussed). All topics are not equal, any more than are all consumer products. Whether or not one should get a tattoo simply does not matter as much as whether societies should use pesticides if the alternative is mass starvation. The latter topic demands that the writer thoroughly examine his or her beliefs about the meaning of life, the value of human life, the role of technology, and so forth; the former topic tends to draw from the student cliché comments about self-expression, success on the job market, and the like. The depth of thought required by the two cannot be compared.

I have therefore designed this course to fulfill what I see as three essential objectives of good basic writing: the harmonious combination of several rhetorical strategies into a strong argument, the constant support of this process with provocative readings and discussions, and the dedication of all varieties of thinking to a range of issues truly worth thinking about.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1) Critical Thinking: the student will be able to analyze a complex issue by questioning and refining terms or definitions, identifying the limitations or potential weaknesses in different kinds of testimony, applying specific cases to generalities, and formulating value judgments in an objective manner (assessed in “summary” exercises and in all stages of essay-writing); 2) Communication: the student will verbalize his or her ideas coherently before an assembled group and also connect ideas effectively in writing (assessed in verbal participation, presentation of outline, and structural quality of written essays); 3) Teamwork: the student will cooperate and collaborate with peers in class discussions and small-group work (assessed through conduct displayed during general discussions and especially in “summary” exercises); and 4) Personal Responsibility: the student will be thorough and punctual in completing required duties (assessed through class attendance, promptness of submissions, and submission of a folder of collected writing at semester’s end).

**Required Work/Grading**

**Class Participation (25%)**: You can’t participate in a class whose meetings you do not attend. The first component of this quarter of your grade is therefore physical presence. I take attendance at the beginning of every class. CP will be dropped a full letter grade every time a student misses a week’s worth of classes (i.e., two classes in this case). Athletes and others who must miss due to representing the university in some capacity are fully excused. Other excuses (health, family crisis, etc.) may be accepted, but documentation may be requested. Please alert me as early as possible if you know in advance that a job obligation, religious duty, etc., will necessitate your absence.

So much for the negative. Now, how do you score positive points for CP? The primary way is through short exercises following reading assignments. On days when a reading should have been completed (see the Schedule below), you will be expected to walk into class with some short bit of writing: perhaps a selection of the most significant phrase and an explanation of your choice, perhaps a statement of the piece’s thesis, perhaps a paraphrase of a previously specified section, perhaps a summary. (For convenience, I collectively call these **summary exercises**. I will have announced exactly what I desire of you during the previous class meeting.) A small-group conference with your peers will typically ensue (after I give a brief look at all initial answers) in which you amend your response as you see fit. I’ll collect all papers next and return them with a grade as the following class begins.

Of course, we will also have full-class discussions of readings and of the general topic about which we’re working up an essay. I value individual, thoughtful participation at these times, and I keep a record of it. A verbal contribution is harder to fix at a grade value, but I can usually tell when a student is speaking with a knowledge of assigned matter or with a genuine desire to address the issues (as opposed to kissing the Blarney Stone). A disappointing average on your short written assignments could be resuscitated dramatically by responsible verbal participation.

The third and final positive component of CP concerns the outline that you will create for each essay. I haven’t really time to write these up helpfully and return them almost at once, as our busy schedule would require of me; and in any case, I think the utility of the outlining process lies in the sharing that occurs when the whole class (more or less) is groping for how to approach an impending essay. On the four days designated below in the Schedule, therefore, you are expected to make a verbal presentation of your outline. (You may simply put a written copy on the overhead projector and add minimal comments if
public speaking makes your blood turn to ice. I will grade pretty leniently, and the grade will count twice that of one of the reading exercises described above; so this should be almost a freebie for all who attend.

**Composition of Essays (70%: 17.5% each):** In a composition class, composed essays are naturally the primary matter to be evaluated. I will ask you to write four essays. All of the essays require multiple strategies: none is a simple “definition” essay or “compare/contrast” essay, though a single such strategy will probably dominate each paper.

The preparation of every essay will involve a three-part process. First comes the **outline** (already explained). Then you will submit a rough draft, and soon thereafter a final draft. Both of these latter two stages will receive a grade for a) grammar, spelling, and usage; and b) coherence, fluidity, and thoroughness of content. **For the rough draft, content is 90% of the total grade:** so if you receive a 100 for content and a 50 for grammar, you still emerge with a 95. The 50 should tip you off, however, that you have trouble brewing if you don’t address your grammatical issues; for **on the final draft, the proportions are 50/50.**

Now, if you were to make a 95/95 on the rough draft, you might well decide simply to resubmit the same paper as your final draft—and that would waste your time and mine. You may therefore **carry over both grades of the rough draft to the final draft if you’re satisfied with them,** submitting nothing and allowing me to concentrate on students who need my attention.

I wish we had time to do a third draft, so that students who put intense effort into overhauling their original version would see a major pay-off in terms of the grade. The next-best thing I can do is this: if your grade on either grammar or content improves by a third or more the second time, I will drop the first score and replace it with the second. If, then, you received a 70 for content on a rough draft and improve that to a 94 on the final draft, then the content on both drafts goes down as a 94.

Every paper should employ **at least two citations,** drawn either from your PDF or from another useful and credible source. I won’t be much of a stickler for the fine points of proper citation: ENGL 1302 addresses such concerns much more intensely. For now, I want you primarily to get used to the technique of including outside material effectively in all of your discussions.

We have no formal grammar book. I believe we can cover the necessary points very effectively during class. In the case of unique personal needs, the Internet now abounds in support. Frankly, I have never known students to pay much attention to grammar manuals (which can be quite pricey), and the Net has now matured to a stage where specific questions can be answered accurately and instantly.

I have devised four writing assignments which will demand that you use several of the basic “essay types” in preparing each paper (definition, exemplification, personal anecdote, research, causation, logical analysis, and so forth) while concentrating on one or two. I have suggested some of the strategies that seem most appropriate for each essay in the PDF’s introductory sections (as well as directly below).

You will have an opportunity in every essay to present and defend your own judgments, though only the final topic is explicitly dedicated to staking out a position. A degree of personal judgment is demanded in every case: we’re not writing a cookbook or a lawnmower manual. My objective is that you should think deeply about a related range of issues and then express your reflections clearly—not that you should adopt any particular point of view. I will not always bother to conceal my own opinions about matters during class discussions; but neither will I ever penalize anyone in the least for disagreeing with me. Indeed, I often argue a position which is not my own simply to elicit further responses; and in some cases, my personal position may be in a state of flux. It happens to the best of us.

This semester we shall be analyzing the complex relationship between advanced technology and our own humanity—our nature and our culture. The following essay assignments are explained with far greater elaboration in the PDF text.

**Essay One: Defining Culture in a High-tech Age** Technology is a cultural creation; it is perhaps the preeminent indication of culture, a fabrication of human beings struggling to survive in a natural environment that advantages most other large animals over them. Yet technology subverts past ways in introducing adaptations. Throughout most of our species’ history, the adjustments were gradual. They were indeed often absorbed into traditional lore so as to seem part of the landscape from the dawn of time (a process called homeostasis by anthropologists). Since the Industrial Revolution, however, change has proceeded at an exponential rate. Has culture, therefore, become impossible to preserve: must not any reasonable definition treat it as a thing of the past? If culture continues to survive, then in what sense does
it do so? Does this new sense have any relation to the stability of values which has always defined culture in the past?

This is primarily a definition and exemplification essay: i.e., the way you explain and use key terms and the illustrations you provide will determine its success or failure. Yet the definition will probably also speculate about the cause-and-effect relationship of culture to its dynamic human environment.

**Essay Two: Evaluating Sources** How do we sift information and reach decisions about technology in the contemporary world when so much of it exists and virtually all of it requires a specialist’s training to understand? Do we simply trust the relevant specialists? What equips them to make synthetic judgments possibly impacting a whole society or planet (or planetary system)? Do we trust elected authorities? Since technology is power (and the latest technology often more power than anyone has ever dreamed of), how can we be assured that they will not exploit their “insider” position? How do we know that they aren’t paying off or bullying the specialists—or that the specialists aren’t forming conspiratorial cabals with a select few of them? How do we avoid paranoia and act responsibly? Should we abandon all restrictions on new drugs, techniques, and gadgetry in the hope that innovation will self-correct and that competing interests will sell out each other’s dirty secrets?

It’s possible to view this essay as a species of compare-and-contrast writing, in that you will determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of certain publications by holding them up beside each other. Of course, this obviously requires a careful choice of examples to use in developing your overall thesis. You may well have to do some descriptive writing or summarizing, as well, in order to convey a clear sense of how your choices handle the subject at issue.

**Essay Three: Analysis of Relevant Examples** Perhaps the most critical issue of all concerning our high-tech future is whether sophisticated artifice will become predominantly centrifugal or centripetal: i.e., will it promote individual freedom or centralized control? Does the essential character of advanced technology incline it to one option—or will human institutions or human nature be the deciding factor? The answer will determine the course of human societal evolution. Which of the two alternatives is likely to prevail, and does not the answer to the previous question (in either direction) promise great tension?

The terms “centripetal” and “centrifugal” are not widely used in this context. The assignment, then, is to view evidence from a perspective that will almost certainly be alien to any reporting of that evidence. A detective often has to look at events that seemed to bear no relation to criminal activity when they took place and then decide if they may in fact conceal a clue. Such is your task here: you’ve been given an abstract axis of distinction, and you have to decide where everyday events fall upon it. The cause-and-effect and analysis types of essay would be somewhat similar in focus to this project.

**Essay Four: Value Judgment** Is our humanity worth preserving? How will we distinguish between human and artificial in the future? Our vital organs, our memory and other brain functions, our resistance to disease, our method of reproduction… every aspect of our life is being or will be “enhanced” by technology. Is it important that we strive to avoid a point where man and machine permanently fuse? If the enhancement is genuine, why should we avoid it, even if we could?

This final essay requires you to do something that has probably tempted you in earlier assignments but was not then appropriate: declare a position. The so-called evaluative or position paper does not enunciate an answer whose rightness or wrongness is determinable through any body of facts. Yet neither is it just a flood of opinionated, subjective statements. It must carefully analyze the relevant issue, probably by exploring critical definitions and causal relationships; and, as always, it should lean on examples to provide clarity. Even though a moral judgment inevitably reduces to a subjective decision, it can still be presented as objectively as possible to an impartial, open-minded audience.

Essays will be composed in three graded phases:

- outline (see Class Participation)—Most of us hate outlines, but they have their uses. In fact, I never feel that I get enough time to review outlines properly with their authors—so I’m having students present their outlines orally to the whole class. A further purpose of this exercise is to develop your speaking skills, which are closely related to writing skills. What I shall look for in the oral presentation (which need not closely follow any written version) is a clear thesis, several major points in support of that thesis, and an ordering of the points which indicates transition
(i.e., how you anticipate getting from one point to the next). Don’t create needless anxiety for yourself if you’re shy: I care about substance, not showmanship.

- **rough draft**—As explained above, grammar and spelling are of secondary importance here (only 10% of the grade). I look closely, instead, at how well your main points have been developed and your transitions executed. Are such facets of the paper’s content clear or vague? Are they profound or shallow? Do they need further illustration?

- **final draft**—Here I grade spelling, and also grammar (to the extent that I have designated certain faults in class as needing to be avoided), on an equal footing with content. I also expect to see whatever clarifications or improvements I have requested on the rough draft to be inserted thoughtfully.

I have few requirements regarding how any phase of any essay should be written or printed. I do greatly prefer double-spacing: it’s easier for me both to read and to correct. You may handwrite rough drafts, if you do so neatly. I do require that all final drafts be typed and printed out for submission. In unusual cases, I will allow you to send a draft via email in a formatted file; but due to the folder (see just below), you will have to print out the returned paper and add it to other hard copies.

**Submission of Complete Folder (5%)**: For various and largely bureaucratic reasons, it is becoming increasingly important for professors to preserve “footprints” of their students’ work. I must therefore ask you to submit a folder (the standard manila type should suffice) with all of your semester’s work on the final day of class. (I will add the final draft of your Fourth Essay after I’ve received and graded it.) This 5% of the grade, to my mind, is either a “did” or “didn’t do”: you’d likely get either a 100 or a 0. I will not start splitting hairs if a few small items are missing. If you have about half of your work, however, I will then be annoyed enough to drop the grade to a 50. Let’s not make this complicated.

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments**
The PDF posted on Blackboard will contain everything you need to read in a form easily accessible through your iPad or Smart Phone. The single exception is Kristof and WuDunn’s *Half the Sky*, which you should already have read if you are an entering freshman. **Assignments are due for (i.e., should have been read by) the day when they are listed. The numbers given in parentheses are those pages where readings occur in the PDF.**

**August**
25 Introduction to course.
27 Discussion of first topic: read “Defining Culture in a High-Tech Age” (5-7) and “Excerpt from The Mustangs” (8-14) for this class.

**September**
1 Read introduction to *The Chaco Legacy* (15) for this class.
4 **Census Day**.
5 Read Postman’s “Five Things We Need to Know About Technological Change” (16-20) for this class. Preparation for First Essay: in-class discussion of outlining.
8 Oral presentation of outline for First Essay (nothing to hand in, but use notes as needed).
10 Submit rough draft of First Essay; discussion of grammar (sentence fragments, comma splices, fused sentences, run-ons).
15 Rough draft returned; continued discussion of grammar and essay topic.
17 Submit final draft of First Essay. Introduction of second topic: “Evaluating Sources.”
22 Read ch. 1 of Ortega y Gasset’s *Revolt of the Masses* (23-26) for this class.
24 Read remaining excerpts from Ortega y Gasset’s *Revolt of the Masses* (26-32) for this class.
29 Read introduction and two articles under “Brain Surgeons and Synonymous Tipsters: Whom to Trust?” (33-37) for this class.

**October**
1 Read introduction and two articles under “HAARP: The Music of Angels or the Devilish Work of
Elves?” (38-42) for this class. Preparation for Second Essay: in-class discussion of outlining.

8 Submit rough draft of Second Essay; discussion of grammar (case, agreement, apostrophes).
13 Rough draft returned; continued discussion of grammar and essay topic.
15 Submit final draft of Second Essay. Third topic introduced: “Analysis of Relevant Examples.”
20 Read excerpts from Suburban Nation, Andres Duany et al. (45-51) for this class.
22 Read Berry’s “Thoughts in the Presence of Fear” (52-54) for this class.
17 Read introduction and two articles under “Be Seeing You!” (55-61) for this class.
20 Read excerpt from Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn’s Half the Sky (131-160 in hard-copy book), also introduction (62 in PDF), for this class. Preparation for Third Essay: in-class discussion of outlining.
22 Oral presentation of outline for Third Essay.
26 Last day to withdraw from class.
27 Submit rough draft of Third Essay; discussion of grammar (use of commas, colons, semicolons).
29 Rough draft returned; continued discussion of grammar and essay topic.

November
3 Submit final draft of Third Essay. Fourth topic introduced: “Value Judgment.”
5 Read Carr’s “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” (65-70) for this class.
10 Read introduction and two articles under “Robotic ‘Lovers’: The Bait That Will Trap and Cage Our Humanity?” (71-75) for this class.
12 Read excerpt from Dice’s “An Analysis of Ray Kurzweil’s Predictions” (76-79) for this class.
17 Read Harris’s “Four Wild Cards” (80-91) for this class. Preparation for Fourth Essay: in-class discussion of outlining.
19 Oral presentation of outline for Fourth Essay.
23- T H A N K S  G I V I N G
27 H O L I D A Y S.

December
1 Submit rough draft of Fourth Essay; discussion of grammar (like/as, vague references).
3 Rough drafts returned and discussed; continued discussion of essay.
7 Submit final draft of Fourth Essay by noon—at my office (BUS 207A), at Language & Lit Office (BUS 236), or electronically. You may of course submit this draft at any time before the deadline.

Policies and Topics Not Specific to This Class

Students Rights and Responsibilities
To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies
Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.
Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:
• Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
• Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
• Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
• Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
• Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy
Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).
Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services
In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible a disability diagnosis such as a chronic disease, learning disorder, head injury or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with an Accessibility Case Manager. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR webpage (http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices/) or the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to saroffice@utttyler.edu.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance
Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities
If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement:
It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:
Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.