What Is Success?

We talk of success all the time, but what is it really? Is there an objective rubric for what “success” entails, or does success mean different things to different people? Is success determined by your sheer grit or by the institutional structures around you? Why does work seem to matter so much when we think about success? And how do notions of success change according to our race, class, gender, and our physical abilities? This course will investigate the anatomy of success and challenge the values that have adhered to it – and indeed, to perhaps reject the meaningfulness of the concept altogether. We will examine certain social phenomena through the lens of success, read people who have distinct ideas about what success constitutes, and debate these ideas. In doing so, we will also explore that which constantly haunts success and take their presence meaningfully: failure.

Course Objectives

We will talk often about what success is and isn’t, but one of the things we will aim to do is successfully write. This course’s fundamental objective is to teach you analytical academic writing, although in the process I hope to also show you how to write with flair and style. In close reading the works of others and creating your own, you will learn to master the five pillars of a successful argument: identifying a problem, developing a claim to address that problem, supporting your claim with evidence, fortifying that evidence with warrants, and providing a motive for writing.

Grading Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1 (3–4 pages, close reading)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2 (4–5 pages, controlled research argument)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 3 oral presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 3 (6–8 pages, research-based argument)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
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Due dates

- Paper 1, first draft Thursday July 4, 9:00am
- Paper 1, final draft Monday July 8, 11:59pm
- Paper 2, first draft Thursday July 11, 9:00am
- Paper 2, final draft Monday July 15, 11:59pm
- Paper 3, research proposal and annotated bibliography Friday July 19, 9:00am
- Paper 3, partial first draft Sunday July 21, 9:00am
- Paper 3, complete draft Wednesday July 24, 11:59pm
- Paper 3, final draft Monday July 29, 11:59pm
- Paper 3, oral presentations Friday August 2
List of readings
William Deresiewicz, selections, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite*
Esmé Weijun Wang, “Yale Will Not Save You”
Franz Kafka, “A Little Fable,” “A Country Doctor”
John J. Brancato, “Kafka’s ‘A Country Doctor’: A Tale for Our Time”
Anne Helen Petersen, “How Millennials Became The Burnout Generation”
*Web Comic Name*, webcomicname.com
Michael Hobbes, “Millennials Are Screwed”
Sahil Lavingia, “Reflecting on My Failure to Build a Billion-Dollar Company”
Will Cheng, “Aching for Repair”
Henley O’Brien, “About Winning”
Ruth Padawar, “Too Fast to Be Female”
Heather Love, “Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence”
Ellen D. Wu, Introduction, *The Color of Success*
Tiana Clark, “This is What Black Burnout Feels Like”
Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility”

Required Texts

Course Policies

Academic honesty
One of the goals of this course is to help you understand how to use published research – the final product of someone’s hard work – to support your own thinking. Plagiarism, in brief, is the submission of work that contains uncited instances of language and ideas that are not your own. Any instance of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty, such as unauthorized collaboration, is verboten. If you are unsure about how to cite something, or have any other related doubts, it is better to ask me than to risk intellectual dishonesty.

Please also acknowledge any legitimate help you have received on your papers in a footnote – these will most likely be from the writing center. Feedback from a friend or classmate also counts!


Attendance and participation
In order for everyone to get the most out of the course, it’s crucial that you participate meaningfully during class time. It’s equally crucial that you respect your peers by not dominating the conversation, cutting across other people, or outright dismissing their thoughts and opinions. Help your peers if they want to express an idea but have not yet found the words for it. Be generous, sensitive, and productively critical.

Food
I am quite happy for you to eat or drink during class, so long as the item under consumption is not your main source of attention.

Technology
Do not use phones, laptops, or tablets in class without my permission.

Access
If you need some form of accommodation not already provided, have a medical condition, or any other medically related information that you feel I should know, please inform me immediately either in person after class or, more privately, in an email. Additional information and resources are available at the Resource Office on Disabilities website: http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/resource-office-disabilities.

Formatting your work
Please format your essays in accordance with the MLA style guide (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01). Your work needs to be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in 12 pt Times New Roman font. The first page of your paper should have a title, along with your full name and date of submission; the upper-right hand corner of succeeding pages should include your last name and page numbers. Any documents uploaded or sent to me should include your name, paper version number, and date. (E.g. Kafka_P1V1_090818)

Submitting your work
You will email draft versions of papers to me. Because this course has a number of writing tasks, it is important that you meet deadlines, especially for drafts. Late submissions of drafts will prevent you from receiving crucial feedback from your peers and me. Final versions of papers should be submitted in hard copy either in class, or emailed to me. Your mark will go down a third of a letter grade for every day an essay is late unless if you have arranged something with me. However, if you visit the writing center for help, you can have a two-day extension that can be used once in the semester.

Gender neutral language
We will get into the practice of using the singular pronoun “they” in our writing and in our discussions, unless if we are referring to an individual whose gender pronoun preferences are known.

Email, office hours, outside assistance
I will answer emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. As I would expect from anyone, be respectful when corresponding with me, and use your discretion when emailing. I can’t take questions about grades, and if you have a particularly complex question or conundrum it would probably be better to talk it out with me during office hours. And of course, my office hours are there for you to discuss your work. If you can’t make my office hours, do email me at least a day in advance to arrange an alternate time.
Course schedule
All readings should be completed before we meet to discuss them. This schedule is subject to change.

Unit One: In School
Week One
William Deresiewicz, selections, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite*; **P1 set**
“Elements of Argument” handout

Weds, July 3  William Deresiewicz, selections, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite*
Helen Sword, “Rules of Engagement,” “Voice and Echo”

Thurs, July 4  **P1V1 due, 9am**

Fri, July 5  Paper #1 Workshop
Esmé Weijun Wang, “Yale Will Not Save You”

Unit Two: At Work
Week Two
Mon, July 8  **P1V2 due, 11:59pm; P2 set**
Franz Kafka, “A Little Fable,” “A Country Doctor”

John J. Brancato, “Kafka’s ‘A Country Doctor’: A Tale for Our Time”
Helen Sword, “Smart Sentencing,” “The Story Net”

Thurs, July 11  **P2V1 due, 9am**

Fri, July 12  Anne Helen Petersen, “How Millennials Became The Burnout Generation”
*Web Comic Name*, webcomicname.com

Week Three
Mon, July 15  **P2V2 due, 11:59; P3 set**
Michael Hobbes, “Millennials Are Screwed”
Sahil Lavingia, “Reflecting on My Failure to Build a Billion-Dollar Company”

Unit Three: In Pain
Weds, July 17  Will Cheng, “Aching for Repair” from *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good*
Helen Sword, “Structural Designs”
Fri, July 19  
**Research proposal and annotated bibliography for P3 due**
Henley O’Brien, “About Winning”  
(https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/480/about-winning-obrien)
Helen Sword, “Jargonitis,” “The Big Picture”

Sun, July 21  
**Partial first draft of P3 due**

**Week Four**
Mon, July 22  
P3 workshop  
Ruth Padawar, “Too Fast to Be Female”  

Weds, July 24  
**First complete draft of P3 due, 11:59pm**
P3 workshop

Fri, July 26  
Heather Love, “Compulsory Happiness and Queer Existence”

**Unit Four: Too White to Fail**

**Week Five**
Mon, July 29  
**P3V2 due, 11:59pm**
Tiana Clark, “This is What Black Burnout Feels Like”

Weds, July 31  
Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility”

Fri, August 2  
Wrap up and oral presentations