It has been said that writing represents a form of cognition; it is a process or a tool we use to acquire knowledge about the world and about ourselves. As writing changes through time, how does this impact human cognition and human societies? As beings of meaning in the world, living against the short spans of our human destinies, how does writing open us to new experiences, heal our wounds in our darkest moments, and bring us forward through time by shaping our memories and our perceptions? With the digital revolution reorganizing and dispersing our writing into new pathways and global networks, what lies ahead for writing and what impact will this have on future human cognition? Conversely, what impact does human thinking have on our writing systems? How does our thinking shape our ability or inability to write? How are the perceptions and power hierarchies of our human communities embedded into our language structures?

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of writing systems. Drawing texts from philosophy, psychology, history, composition studies and literature, this course aims to challenge our assumptions about writing through experiments and self-observation in reading and writing exploring topics ranging from post-colonial literature to the study of dreams.

By the end of this course you will have engaged with the following questions:

- How has writing evolved over time? What if it had been otherwise?
- What are the varied uses of writing and do certain kinds of writing engage specific modes of thought?
- Is expert writing a learnable process? How can we know?
- Why is writing so often considered intuitive, or dependent on inspiration?
- Can writing be a symptom of, or a therapeutic cure for, (certain) mental illnesses?
- How does writing reinforce certain power structures or inequalities? How can writing mediate cross-cultural collaboration or conflict?

**Prerequisites**
Rhet 201 or equivalent

*Credit to Dr. Ebony Coletu for the design of this course.*
Course Outcomes
By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Analyze the relationship between writing and cognition.
- Conduct experiments that test the validity of claims about writing and cognition.
- Write collaboratively with classmates.
- Present original research and respond productively to peers as research colleagues.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

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<th>Lecture</th>
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| 1       | Sept 2 | Picture Writing  
            Watch: David McCandless: The beauty of data visualization |
| 2       | Sept 6 | Pictographs, Ideographs and Logographs  
            Coulmas “Writing systems of the world” |
| 3       | Sept 10| The Evolutionary Hypothesis  
            Schmandt-Besserat “How Writing Came About”  
            Gelb “A Study of Writing” |
| 4       | Sept 13| CBL Discussion and Preparation, Presentation by Gerhart Center and by Dr. Tandiar of the Josaab Foundation |
| 5       | Sept 17| Orality, Literature, and Orature  
            Walter Ong “The Orality of Language”  
            Ngugi wa Thiong’o “Orature: Notes towards a Performance Theory” |
| 6       | Sept 20| Does Writing change the way you Think?  
            Walter Ong “Writing Restructures Consciousness” |
| 7       | Sept 24| Is Writing Unsophisticated?  
            Damasio, “The Feeling of What Happens” |
| 8       | Sept 27| Dream Writing  
            Hall “A Cognitive Theory of Dreams” |
| 9       | Oct 1  | Writing it Out: Depression, Trauma, and Expressive Writing  
            Kitty Klein and Adriel Boas, “Expressive Writing can Increase Working Memory Capacity”  
            Smyth et al “Expressive Writing and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder” |
| 10      | Oct 4  | Automatic Writing and the External Narrator Hypothesis  
            Taves, “Religious Experience and the Divisible Self” |
| 11      | Oct 8  | Expressive Writing and Semi-Consciousness  
            Boice and Meyers, “Two Parallel Traditions” |
| 12      | Oct 11 | Writing Autobiographically  
            Eakin, “Autobiographical Consciousness”  
            Mary Karr “The Liar’s Club” |
| 13      | Oct 13 (Sat) | Make up class! Watch – Elizabeth Gilbert “On Creativity” |
| 14      | Oct 15 | Writing Psychosis  
            Saks, “The Center Cannot Hold” (ch4 and 5) |
| 15      | Oct 18 | Hypergraphia  
            Flaherty, “The Midnight Disease” |
| 16      | Oct 22 | Doctors, Writing  
            Charon “Narrative Medicine” |

*Oct 25 and 29 Eid al Adha – No classes!*
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This syllabus is subject to change with sufficient notice to students

**Josaab Foundation: Alternative Community-Based Learning (ACBL) Activity**

This course contains a component of community based learning. Reinforcing the course goals of understanding the connection between writing, memory, our self-perception and our connection to others, the students in this course will have the opportunity to work with the Josaab Foundation, which serves geriatric patients in Egypt. Those students who chose to engage in this activity will work with terminally ill and early-onset Alzheimer’s patients to record narratives of their memories for posterity.

For those students who are unable to engage in this ACBL activity, they will have the alternative of writing a research paper on Writing Disease in lieu of recording and translating the personal narratives of the Josaab Foundation Patients. More information about the Josaab foundation can be found at:

http://www.josaab.org/home.asp
Grading Policy
Participation 10%
Log Lines 10%
Writing on Waking Analysis 10%
CBL work and summary 10%
CBL Reflection paper 10%
Writing Disease Mid-Term Essay / Josaab Narratives 20%
Writing Process Recordings and Analysis 10%
Reading Writing and Image Final Project 20%

*Policy on Attendance*: If you miss four classes without a medical reason, your grade will drop 10%. If you miss six classes you will be asked to drop the course. Two late arrivals constitute one absence. You are late if you arrive ten minutes after class has started.

Reading
All readings are available online and should be read before coming to the class.

AUC's Code of Ethics
All members of the AUC community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the AUC community's academic, professional, and personal growth.

Academic Integrity
Students at the American University in Cairo are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity, which is a central pillar of education and intellectual activity. Researching and writing papers are important requirements of this class. To pass the course, students must understand plagiarism and academic dishonesty and practice academic integrity in all of the work produced. To ensure this practice, students will be using MLA style documentation, citation and formatting and submit their drafts and finals to Turnitin.com. Writing involves the risk of plagiarism, arguably the most severe breach of the code of academic integrity. Its consequences can be drastic. However, plagiarism can be avoided by familiarizing yourself with what it is and heightening your awareness of it. Learning how to summarize, paraphrase and quote effectively while writing are three of the most important skills students can attain. For more information on AUC’s policy and the subject of academic integrity, go to: http://www.aucegypt.edu/academics/resources/acadintegrity/Pages/default.aspx.

Disability Access
Students with disabilities are encouraged to notify instructor to ensure that special accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Writing Center
The Writing Center can work with you to improve any aspect of the research projects assigned in RHET 201. Appointments are made at your convenience and can be scheduled online at http://pacs.aucegypt.edu/wcconferencing/ or in person either of our two physical locations: Waleed P112 or in the Library Learning Commons on the Plaza Floor. Additionally, you may submit papers electronically to the OWL (Online Writing Lab).