The practice of telling stories is the practice of generating a diversity of meanings. It is a practice of deep relationality, not a looking at, but a looking with or a looking through or a thinking through together. ~Leeanne Simpson

LFS_V 150 001: Scholarly Writing & Argumentation in Land & Food Systems

2025 W1, September - December

Tuesday, Thursday, 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm PST

Earth and Ocean Sciences Building, Room 135

COURSE BIG IDEA

Writing is a practice of tending—relationships, questions, and responsibilities.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (INVITATIONS)

In this course, we invite you to:

1. Value and actively use writing – to learn, explore, and figure out connections between self, community, place, scholarly discipline, and urgent global challenges
2. Reflect on and articulate how your positionality (e.g., identities, histories, culture, personal experiences) impacts your scholarly work
3. Consistently apply critical thinking skills to effectively analyze complex information to deepen your understanding of key topics and issues
4. Build skills in effective scholarly writing, including:

a. Creating interesting research questions, based on scholarly exploration and personal reflection
b. Finding, evaluating, and integrating different types of evidence (including peer-reviewed research) to make insightful contributions to scholarly conversations
c. Developing distinct written arguments informed by your research, positionality, and thoughtful consideration of multiple perspectives
d. Giving and receiving critical and effective feedback

5. Develop a sustainable writing practice (including pre-writing, free writing, drafting, revision) that will persist through times of challenge and continue to benefit you, both academically and personally

THE TEACHING TEAM

INSTRUCTOR NAME & EMAIL	**Lindsay Cuff**, lindsay.cuff@ubc.ca I will try my best to respond to emails and direct messages through Canvas within 24 hours between 9:00–5:00pm Monday to Friday. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any point throughout the term if you have any questions or concerns about assignments, topics we are exploring in class, etc. I know it can be intimidating to contact a professor, but please know that **I am here to support your learning.**
OFFICE & OFFICE HOURS	**My Office**: MCML 191 | **Office Hours**: TBD What are office hours? Office hours are open drop-in times when you can come to my office to get one-on-one support. Maybe you want some feedback on a research question, a draft of a paragraph, a sentence, a section in a paper, or even just the seed of an idea. Or maybe you're still struggling to read research papers. Come on in! Let's work through it together. Come to office hours early in the term and come often.
TEACHING ASSISTANT (TA) NAME & EMAIL	**Ella Wright,** ellaw8@student.ubc.ca

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & INSTRUCTOR POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

I live and work next to the Pacific Ocean on the traditional unceded lands of the Musqueam people, the same lands on which the UBC Vancouver campus is situated. I was born next to the Atlantic Ocean on Mi'kmaq territory but grew up at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers on Treaty One territory and the home of the Métis Nation, and on the banks of the Fraser River on the traditional unceded lands of the Semá:th Nation. I am a white settler of English, Irish, German, and Dutch descent. As both a settler and a teacher of writing, I am keenly aware of the importance of multiple stories and try to hold both things to be true: that language can be harmful, and it can also be transformative.

WHAT TEXTBOOK DO YOU NEED?

- The primary textbook for this course is a (FREE!) Open Online Resource (OER): Writing Place - A Scholarly Writing Textbook.

All additional learning materials will be provided and posted on Canvas. Check Canvas often!

COURSE FORMAT/STRUCTURE

This course will be a mix of lectures, class discussions, in-class and asynchronous writing exercises, and learning activities. The course will be delivered mainly in-person, with some multi-access and hybrid options sprinkled throughout the term to support student flexibility and choice. These multi-access and hybrid opportunities will be communicated with you in advance. Each term, I notice a direct correlation between student growth/grades and class attendance. Because of this, your attendance and engagement in class will be assessed in several ways: through iClicker questions at the beginning of each class, submitted responses to in-class writing prompts, and through a self-assessment at the end of the term.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Links to all readings, details about each assignment, due dates and weekly overviews/checklists will be posted in each Weekly Module on Canvas. This schedule is just an outline and is subject to change according to the class needs and pace, determined together as a community. **Check our course Canvas page often!**

Week	Theme	Assignments Due
0	Introduction to the Course	• Read the syllabus, explore the course
1	Why Write?	• Writing Journal Prompts

2	Writing & Positionality	• Writing Journal Prompts • Positionality Assignment
3	Writing, Genre, and Community	• Writing Journal Prompts
4	Writing is Listening	• Writing Journal Prompts
5	Cultivating Research Practices	• Writing Journal Prompts • Library Research Modules 2-4
6	Research is Rooted in Curiosity	• Writing Journal Prompts • Asking Questions, Seeking Answers-in-Progress Peer Review
7	Writing is a Conversation	• Writing Journal Prompts • Asking Questions, Seeking Answers-in-Progress Final Submission
8	Writing is Contribution	• Writing Journal Prompts
9	Crafting a Research Argument	• Writing Journal Prompts • Final Project: Research Contribution Proposal
10	Process & Practice: Making a Research Contribution	• Writing Journal Prompts
11	Writing Anxiety and Self-Criticism, Giving Generous Feedback	• Writing Journal Prompts • Final Project: Research Contribution Outline
12	Revision as Transformation	• Writing Journal Prompts • Final Project: Research Contribution Peer Review
13	Celebrate and Share	• Final Project: Research Contribution Final Submission

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Across all assignments in this course, you'll be assessed not just on what you produce, but on how you engage—with curiosity, care, and accountability—as you join and contribute to ongoing conversations through writing.

ASSIGNMENT	LEARNING OUTCOMES	WEIGHT
Writing Journal	L.O.'s 1,2,5	25%
Positionality Assignment	L.O.'s 1,2	15%
Asking Questions, Listening for Answers Final Submission • Draft Submission + Peer Review	L.O.'s 1,3,4,5	10% 5%
Final Project: Making a Research Contribution Final Submission • Outline • Draft Submission + Peer Review	L.O.'s 1,3,4,5	25% 5% 5%
Self-Assessment/Reflection	L.O.'s 1,5	5%
iClicker Engagement/Attendance	L.O. 1	5%

*For detailed assignment descriptions, please see our Canvas course page.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON GRADES

I center my assessment and grading structure on two core beliefs:

1. We get better at writing through writing, receiving feedback and revising.
2. In order to get better at writing, we need a space in which we can take risks

To create a learning community for you that aligns with these core beliefs (and supports you in growing as a writer), **most of your assignments will be graded using an alternative assessment approach**. What does that mean? **It means that everything except for your Final Project: Research Contribution will be assessed as Incomplete (0%) / Complete (80%) / Complete+ (90-95%)**. Each assignment will have detailed instructions including grading rubrics that clearly lay out what you need to do to achieve a complete. Achieving a complete+ will depend on you going above and beyond the expectations by showing insight, a high level of craft, and original thought. Assignments that achieve complete+ are exemplary—they are original, thought-provoking and shift the reader's thinking in some way. Examples of assignments in each category will be provided.

You will be allowed to complete two revisions and resubmissions throughout the term on any two assignments of your choice (i.e. if you receive an incomplete on an assignment and want to revise according to the feedback to receive a complete, or if you receive a complete and want to revise according to the feedback and resubmit to try and get a complete+). **These revisions MUST be resubmitted within one week of receiving your feedback.**

You will complete a guided self-assessment at the end of the course that will ask you to reflect on your engagement in this course and assign yourself a grade. This will count as 5% toward your final grade. We will spend time throughout the course learning how to self-assess and reflect on our own learning journeys.

COURSE COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

If, for any reason, you cannot submit an assignment on the due date, **please contact me at least 24 hours in advance to discuss an extension**. If you do not contact me, this will be reflected in your grade. This course is carefully designed so that each assignment builds upon each other. The teaching team provides detailed and personalized feedback so that you can either revise or incorporate the feedback into your next assignment in order to grow as a writer in this course. If you are struggling and don't think you'll be able to complete an assignment on time, please reach out to me or to your TA as soon as you can! Don't put it off and think that things will magically change. Communication is key.

AI USE AND WRITING AS THINKING

In this course, writing is not just about producing polished texts—it is how we think, grapple, relate, and make meaning. Because of this, using AI to generate assignments or bypass the thinking process undermines the purpose of this course. However, if you choose to engage with AI tools (e.g., for brainstorming, revision, or structural feedback), you must:

- Reflect on and document *how* and *why* you used AI.
- Include an **AI Use Statement** with your submission that acknowledges this engagement as part of your ethical commitment to transparency, trust, and relational accountability.

Consider these questions:

- What were you seeking from AI?
- Did AI help you avoid something hard? What might you have learned by staying with the struggle?
- How did AI shape—not just your writing—but your sense of voice, agency, and relationship to knowledge?

We will co-create more specific guidelines around AI, Trust, and Transparency together as a classroom community.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

If you use someone else's work without clearly acknowledging the source—this is plagiarism. This includes paraphrasing or directly quoting any work, published or unpublished, that another person wrote without clearly acknowledging that person as the source. If you allow someone else to do your work for you (including GenAI) and claim that work as your own, this is also plagiarism. I am committed to helping you work honestly, and I will help you learn how to avoid these mistakes. If you have any questions about whether you might be plagiarizing without knowing it, please ask me before you turn in your assignment. See the earlier section in this syllabus for more about AI use.

IMPORTANT DATES

Last day to drop **without a W standing**	September 15, 2025
Last day to use the Student Service Centre to drop **with a W standing**	October 24, 2025
Student Service Centre unavailable, **faculty approval required**	After October 24, 2025

RESOURCES FOR YOU

There are resources available at UBC to help you navigate your studies, this course, and to give you extra support with your writing:

Your subject librarian, Katherine Miller, is available to support you as you tend to questions, and search for resources. Drop into the Woodward Library or make an appointment with Katherine!

Check out the UBC Centre for Scholarly Communications to book online or in-person consultations on your writing.

LFS Student Services are INCREDIBLE and are here to provide you with academic guidance and support.

Is your laptop broken and you need to borrow one? Do you need tutoring or want to go to a workshop that goes deeper into library skills or citations? Check out the Chapman Learning Commons in the Irving K. Barber Library.

I look forward to getting to know you and learning together this semester! Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions about any aspect of this course, if you need to request accommodation, or if you have any feedback as we go along.

APPENDIX: ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

1. Writing Journal (25%)

General Description:
One of the major themes in this course is that writing is not just an end-product, but an important process of *grappling with* and *thinking through*. One of our hopes, as instructors and mentors in this course, is that you will value and actively use writing - to learn, explore, and figure out connections between self, community, place, scholarly discipline, and urgent global challenges.

To support you in developing this approach to writing, you will keep a guided writing journal in which you will explore your responses to 1-2 guided prompts per week. These prompts will be closely tied to the themes of each module and will be released on a weekly basis. The purpose of this writing notebook is to stimulate thinking about issues, questions, curiosities, and challenges raised over the course of the term. The kind of writing you will be doing is sometimes called “exploratory” writing – that is, writing that lets you think out loud on paper without having to worry about whether your writing is effective for an audience. Therefore, features of formal writing such as correct sentence structure, spelling, and organization won’t matter as much – this is a practice, not a product.

Research has shown that the regular habit of journal writing can deepen students’ thinking about their disciplines by inviting them to experience the scholarly community as a place for wonder, curiosity, and controversy, rather than simply a new body of information to learn.

How do I write a journal entry?
For many of your journal entries, you will use a technique called *focused freewriting.* You will be given a question, an invitation, or a prompt and will write nonstop for a set period, thinking aloud on paper without being too concerned about spelling, organization, or grammar. If your mind suddenly dries up, just write *relax* or a key word over and over again until a new thought arrives. Your purpose is to explore your responses to the question as fully as possible. For some of your journal entries, you will be asked to revise your freewriting material or optionally share excerpts of your entries. Each journal entry prompt will clearly provide the instructions and expectations.

How long is a journal entry?
We suggest 15 minutes of honest, unedited thinking—less about how fast or how much you write, and more about how deeply you’re willing to stay with the prompt.

Do I get full points just for doing the entries?
Each journal entry is worth one point. You’ll receive the point as long as you’ve shown a sincere effort to engage the prompt—whether that means following a curious thread, lingering in a tension, or even looping through confusion. The writing doesn’t need to be ‘deep’ in the performative sense; it just needs to be yours. You will not be judged on things like spelling, organization, and grammar. We ask you to resist the temptation to outsource this writing to generative AI—not because we’re suspicious, but because this is a space for your own raw thinking, your moments of confusion and clarity. Imperfection is not only allowed, but necessary. Using generative AI in this context can short-circuit the very process we’re trying to cultivate here: sitting with uncertainty, noticing your own patterns of thought, and making space for something surprising to emerge. This writing is for you—not for an algorithm to get right.

Creating your writing journal on UBC Blogs

Because we want to be able to witness, together, your evolving writing and thinking throughout the term, you are invited to keep your writing journal as a private blog on the UBC blogs platform. The blog will be private—visible only to you and the teaching team. We may sometimes invite students (with permission) to share excerpts during class or on collaborative discussion boards—but this will always be optional. You will find detailed instructions about how to set up your blog and create your first entry on Canvas.

At the end of the term, you'll be invited to write a final entry reflecting on how your writing and thinking have shifted across the course. What questions have deepened? What tensions remain unresolved? What moments surprised you?

2. POSITIONALITY ASSIGNMENT (15%)

"In order for us to know where we want to go together, we need to know where we are. And for us to know that, we need to know where we've been" (Sanchez, 2019).

CONTEXT
As a learner, a writer, and a researcher, your work is bound up in who you are, what you have authority to speak about, and who you are accountable to. This is called your "positionality." According to Brown, articulating our positionality or "locating ourselves" is more than just stating where we're from, or where our ancestors are from—it's about our relationships to land, to language, to community, as well as the different social, spiritual and political elements in our lives (2005). This can include things like our gender, race, class, sexual expression, and other important aspects of our identities. These factors influence our individual perspectives in deep and sometimes unconscious ways.
Cam Willet (2009) explains that,

> For many Indigenous people, [the act of self-location] is intuitive, launched immediately through the protocol of introductions. It shows respect to the ancestors and allows community to locate us. Situating self implies clarifying one's perspective on the world. This is about being congruent with a knowledge system that tells us that we can only interpret the world from the place of our experience.

For this assignment, you will craft your own positionality statement by reflecting upon and communicating how you came to be where you are now, and how your history and experiences influence your relationship to other lands, peoples, and knowledge systems you encounter.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AS YOU COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT
You may find it helpful to do some preliminary exploratory writing as you reflect on your positionality. Use the following questions to help generate material to use in your assignment. You do not need to answer every one of these questions. They're here to help you find an entry point. Let them be invitations, not obligations. Choose what feels most alive or meaningful to you. You can also write into tensions, absences, or uncertainties that emerge.

- Are you part of a group that has a strong sense of cultural history (e.g., related to religion, place, ethnicity, and/or other factors)? What are key aspects of that shared cultural history, and how have they affected your personal development? (Consider: What values do you hold and what assumptions do you make, based on that cultural history?)
- What is your family history? Where have you (and your ancestors, before you) lived, and worked, and loved? Are you familiar with the Indigenous Nations of the lands on

which you and your family have lived? (You can learn more here: native-land.caLinks to an external site.)
- What is your own personal story? How have you come to be here, a student in LFS 150 at the University of British Columbia, today? What aspects of your own history are particularly important in the context of this course?
- Where does your knowledge come from? This is a big question! Consider: How do you know what you know? How do you learn? As you try to understand the world and figure out what is "true," are some ways of learning preferable to others for you? (Which ways of learning are most valuable to you in different contexts, and why?)
- Who are you today? Can you describe this in 1-2 sentences? What do you prioritize in describing yourself? (What do you think is most important in terms of who you are, today?) Consider: What identities do you hold? What do you value? How do you show up in the world? How do you relate to others? What are you hoping for your future?
- How does all of this come together to influence how you understand yourself in relation to the world? Consider: What impact have your histories, identities, and experiences had on you, your perspectives, your values, and your ways of learning?

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Consider the insights you have gained through your preliminary writing to craft your Positionality Statement. Your tone can be reflective, grounded, narrative, and thoughtful. You don't need to write in academic language—but you should write with care, awareness, and self-reflection. You are encouraged to write in the first person. Your statement should be 2-4 paragraphs in length (approximately 500-750 words). Submit it on Canvas, formatted according to APA 7 formatting guidelines, including a title page (see the title page guidelines here: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/title-pageLinks to an external site.), page numbers, and audience-appropriate font. Please also share your statement (in part or in full) with our class learning community on the provided padlet board.

On a final note: there's no one way to do this assignment. Some of you might find grounding in your family stories; others might focus on migration and/or disconnection. Some of you may write with uncertainty, or even resistance. That's okay. This is not about resolving your identity—it's about cultivating awareness of your own relationships to land, identity, knowledge, and learning in this context.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & EXAMPLES

- Example Positionality Statement (Lindsay Cuff - Assistant Professor of Teaching - Forestry / LFS)
- The Historical is Personal – Redux: Positionality (extra reading if you want to go deeper!)
- Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines

IMPORTANT TERMS

Traditional Territory: Traditional territory refers to the lands and waters occupied by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. In Canada, some traditional territories have been ceded through the treaty process while other lands remain unceded (land never surrendered through treaty or war).

Positionality: "'Positionality,' also known as self-location, refers to an awareness that our life experiences and circumstances impact how we see and understand the world around us, and further, that this understanding is situational." (Eidinger, 2017)

REFERENCES

Brown, L. A. (2005). Research as resistance: critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches [eBook edition] (Strega, Susan, Ed.). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
Kovach, M. (2009). Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations, and contexts. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Sanchez, N. (2019). Decolonization is for everyone.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP9x1NnCWNYLinks to an external site.
This assignment has been created and adapted using the following resources:

- Xwi7xwa Library: Locating Ourselves
- Indigenous Initiatives Design Series (Fall 2023)

3. Asking Questions, Listening for Answers (15%)

Description and Purpose

In this course, research is not a hunt for the "right" answer—it's an act of curiosity, listening, and contribution. This first research assignment is your opportunity to practice the same moves you'll use in your final project, but on a smaller scale. You will choose a question that matters to you, explore how others have engaged with it, and offer a brief but meaningful contribution to the ongoing conversation.
Think of this as a *miniature research contribution*: you are not trying to "solve" the question, but to bring together a few voices, perspectives, and insights in a way that deepens your own and your reader's understanding.

Audience & Goal

Your primary audience is the scholarly community in your field of interest—and any other communities you feel responsible to in relation to your question. Your goal is to write a short, thoughtful piece that helps your readers see the question, and its possibilities, in a richer way than before.
Length & Format

- 2–3 paragraphs (approximately 250–500 words)
- APA 7 style for formatting, citations, and references
- Clear, descriptive title and paragraphing to help readers follow your thinking

Process Steps

1. **Choose a Seed Question**
   Select a question from your journal entries, in-class discussions, or your own observations that you feel drawn to explore. It should be:
   - Open-ended and significant beyond your personal context
   - Possible to engage meaningfully with just a few sources
   - Small enough to explore in depth within 2–3 paragraphs

2. **Preliminary Listening**
   Do a short round of exploratory reading to understand:
   - Who is already talking about this question
   - What ideas, evidence, or debates already exist

- Where there may be missing voices or perspectives

3. **Gather & Engage Evidence**
Select **1–2 peer-reviewed articles** and **1–2 other credible sources** (e.g., government reports, community-based publications, reputable news). Read closely and critically, noticing connections, contrasts, and questions they raise for you.

4. **Write Your Short Contribution**

- **Paragraph 1 – Context & Question:** Introduce your question, explain why it matters, and briefly situate it in the existing conversation (using 1-2 credible sources).
- **Paragraph 2 – Insights & Tensions:** Weave together what you learned from your sources (drawing on 1-2 peer-reviewed articles). Highlight one or more connections, tensions, or new insights that emerged from putting them in dialogue. You are invited to try the CEA paragraph structure to organize this paragraph.
- **Closing (2–3 sentences):** Suggest one possible "next step" for the conversation—through further research, a shift in practice, or a reframing of the question.

Tone
Write in a scholarly voice that also reflects your curiosity and care. Be open to complexity and contradiction. You are not expected to "finish" the question here—you are practicing joining the conversation in a way that is attentive, informed, and generative.

4. Final Project: Making a Research Contribution (25%)

For your final project, you are invited to develop a more complex research question to guide you in searching for, evaluating, and engaging with evidence in order to make a thoughtful contribution to a scholarly conversation. Remember, a research paper is not a show of all you know—it is an inquiry, guided by curiosity, shaped by listening, and offered in dialogue with the thinkers who have come before you and those who will come after.

You will:

- Craft a **research question** that matters—situated in a scholarly conversation, rooted in care and curiosity.
- Engage in **research** that listens across voices, contexts, and disciplines.
- Weave a **thoughtful contribution** that adds meaningfully to an ongoing conversation, with care for both your sources and your readers.

You don't need to engage in primary research or generate new data to contribute. Here are some ways to engage meaningfully and offer something new:

- **Synthesize across disciplines, fields, or ways of knowing** to generate new insights.
- **Weigh in on a controversy**, bringing a new, evidence-based perspective
- **Put research into action** by arguing for new policies, applications or social changes
- **Put research into context** by revealing limitations of the research within real-world contexts

Audience & Purpose

Audience: Members of the scholarly community and other communities you are responsible to—ancestral, ecological, etc.
Goal: Build a cohesive and rigorous argument that invites your audience into deeper reflection, learning, and transformation.

Format and Style

Length: 4–5 pages (1000–1500 words), plus a 125–150 word abstract and a references list.
Format: Use APA style. Include a **descriptive title**, headings, and subheadings that help your readers navigate the arc of your thinking.
Tone: Write in a scholarly voice—but one that welcomes complexity, contradiction, and care. Let your own voice be present, even when you're speaking alongside others.

Sources

Use at least four peer-reviewed academic sources. You are also welcome to draw on other credible sources such as government reports, community-based, or land-based sources, as long as you engage them with care and accountability.

Process Stages

1. **Preliminary Listening** – Begin with broad, exploratory research. Follow what draws your attention.

2. **Question Emergence** – Draft your guiding research question. Meet with the teaching team to refine and deepen it.

3. **Engaged Research** – Read widely and slowly, across multiple perspectives. Notice what resonates or unsettles you.

4. **Incubation** – Let your ideas develop. Step away. Walk. Breathe. Reflect. Sketch. Talk to someone. Let something grow.

5. **Outline Submission** – Share your emerging structure and direction.

6. **Rough Messy Draft + Peer Review** – Exchange drafts with peers. Offer feedback from a place of care and curiosity.

7. **Revision as Transformation** – Rework your piece, not just for clarity, but to reflect deeper learning.

8. **Final Submission** – Submit your final piece