ON WRITING:

Why do We Write?
What is Writing?

• Language is like the air we breathe. It is invisible, inescapable, indispensable, and we take it for granted.
Connection between Reading and Writing

“There are only two ways, really, to become a writer: one is to write, the other is to read.” – Anna Quindlen
Reading

• Reading itself is a creative act, not a passive act.

• Books can take us anywhere—not actually so when we recognize how much agency is required when we read, how much we are training our minds to create the details tantalizingly omitted from the text.
“Writing – any writing - is like knitting. Its an intellectual knack that some people have naturally, and which develops astonishingly with practice, but which lots of people can’t do.”
“Writing is communicative behavior motivated by desires and fears. Legal documents, however impersonal their rhetoric, enshrine material motives” - Larry Riggs
• “Writing is a form of personal freedom. It frees us from the mass identity we see in the making all around us. In the end writers will write not to be outlaw heroes of some under-culture but mainly to save themselves, to survive as individuals.”
Why do you write?

- Joyce Carol Oates: “I never ask the questioner, why do you work, why do you dream? I reply because I enjoy doing it.”

- Oates: “We write for the same reasons we dream, because we can dream, because it is the nature of human imagination to dream.”
“Those of us who write, consciously arrange and rearrange reality for the purposes of exploring its hidden meanings.”

Flannery O’Connor: “Writing is not an escape from reality, it is plunge into reality and it is very shocking to the system. The writer is a person who has hope in the world: people without hope do not write.”
Writing & Energy

• When people begin to write they are buoyed up by energy, the sense that they have something unique to say and that only they can say it.

• Energy is sacred: we write because we have an excess of energy, because we are more nervous or lively or curious about life than other people.
Artists and Priests

• “The monstrous works of the 19th century novels like *Moby Dick*, *Crime & Punishment*, were written by men who wanted to get everything on paper, everything!”

• The artist is a kind of priest.
Oates:

- “I want to know the why behind human emotions, even as I can only say again and again that human emotions are our deepest mystery and there is no understanding them. We write because we are ordained to a noble task, that of making clear mysteries, or pointing out mysteries where a numbing and inaccurate simplicity has held power.”
Imre `Kertész: Hungarian Nobel Prize winner for literature

• “In all respects my existence is horrible, except for writing: so I write and write to endure my existence to justify it.”
To make appointments for writing and other subject matter consultations please go to: www.usfsm.edu/infocommmons/appointment/php; for more information about Learning Support Services please call: (941) 359-4323.