

Syllabus Fall 2026

ENGL 1143: Intro to Critical Reading & Academic Writing

1R3: MWF 1:00 – 1:50pm BW 117

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Contact Information

Instructor: Ericka Russell **Email:** ericka.russell@msutexas.edu

Office: Bea Wood Hall 233 **Office Hours:** MW 9:00 – 10:30am, T 2:00-4:00pm or by appt.

Course Description

This course provides training in critical reading and academic writing. It focuses on the writing process and rhetorical concepts while requiring students to read and write a variety of texts. Students will be required to prepare a synthesis paper of moderate length demonstrating critical reading and academic writing skills, including selection, evaluation, analysis, integration, and documentation of sources.

Required Materials

- A one-subject notebook or journal dedicated to 1143 (and the co-requisite 0043). *See the Commonplace Book description in the 0043 Syllabus under Major Assignments.*
 - If you wish to opt-out of the Program and purchase the required course materials on your own, you must do so using the opt-out instructions, which will be sent to your my.msutexas.edu email on the second day of class. Contact jenny.denning@msutexas.edu (MSU Bookstore) if you have questions about opting out.
- Bedford Bookshelf Resources. Ebook materials are provided via Inclusive Access in D2L. You won't buy them separately!

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

- Apply key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Engage in a writing process that includes invention, drafting, collaboration, and revision
- Read & compose for inquiry, learning, thinking, & communicating in varied contexts
- Use strategies – such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources
- Use sources ethically & in contextually appropriate ways & follow a designated style guide
- Demonstrate proficient use of linguistic structures, including grammar and mechanics, through practice in composing and revising

THECB Core Learning Objectives – Communication

This course fulfills a Communication Core requirement and will assess the following:

- To assess the following skills, the Synthesis rubric will be applied to the Synthesis Essay.
 - *Critical Thinking Skills*, to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
 - *Communication Skills*, to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
 - *Personal Responsibility Skills*, to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
- The Peer Review Teamwork rubric will be applied to each student's preparation for and participation in a peer review workshop to assess Teamwork Skills.
 - *Teamwork Skills*, to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Grading System

Table 1: Breakdown of Points for Final Grade

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points</i>
Process Logs and Drafts	100
Rogerian Argument Essay	150
Rhetorical Case Study	200
Creative Annotated Bibliography	100
Synthesis Essay	300
Participation	150
Total Class Points	1,000

Table 2: Total Points for Final Letter Grade

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
A	895-1000
B	795-894
C	695-794
D	595-694
F	0-594

Overview of Assignments

Process Logs and Drafts:

After writing for a set period of time, you will upload the work along with a plan for the next session and, if applicable, feedback given by the instructor or peers. Process logs build into drafts. Drafts that are required to be submitted will be given a completion grade and feedback.

Rogierian Argument Essay:

For your first essay, you will write your own Rogierian Argument. Pay special attention to the fact that the Rogierian Argument asks you to not only consider the opposing “side,” but to understand and represent it. You will need to pick a topic that is both arguable and personal to you. You will need to determine a specific audience and demonstrate a clear goal. We will have numerous readings, lessons, and guidance to prepare for and construct the essay.

Rhetorical Case Study:

On the path to the Synthesis Essay is the Rhetorical Case Study. During Unit 2, we will build an understanding and language for rhetoric and rhetorical analysis. You will pick a topic that is circulating online and that is of interest and intrigue to you. During this unit, we will engage with readings and methods that enliven your understanding of the larger social media landscape as well as the landscape of your topic. Using checkpoints and logs in your commonplace book, you will review your time on a chosen social media app. Through metacognition and media literacy, you will perform an introspective case study where you monitor how your algorithm shapes your perception of the topic. This is a steppingstone to the Synthesis Essay, the essay where you will use research and critical thinking to fully understand the online positioning, agenda, or influence of the topic before diving into a personal stance. The Rhetorical Case Study will then be revised into an opening for your Synthesis Essay.

Creative Annotated Bibliography

In preparation for the synthesis essay, the Creative Annotated Bibliography displays multimodal thinking. The bibliography will have four sources and four different annotation styles. For example, one annotation could be a TikTok/reel explaining the source and its material. Others could be an infographic of the source, a hypothetical interview with the author(s), or an “official” review of the source. A list of annotation options will be provided along with the opportunity to propose an annotation of your own making. The bibliography will not only record your engagement with your sources; it is also a measure to ensure you are finding and investigating sources long before the Synthesis Essay is due. Note that this is a checkpoint along the way to the Synthesis Essay, additional sources may be added or some may be taken away by the time you get to your Works Cited in your Synthesis Essay. Once the Creative Bibliography is turned in, we will use a MLA Works Cited moving forward on the Synthesis Essay.

Synthesis Essay

The synthesis essay uses the foundation from the Rhetorical Case Study to understand and investigate the context and rhetorical positioning of a selected topic. Students have the ability to stumble upon and use topics that interest or impact them, but the topic must be current and found online via social media, news outlet, influencer, etc. This singular viewpoint or message will then be investigated to create a more accurate and nuanced view. The research will pull the curtain back on your topic: whether it be a person, an event, a product or service, a claim, a fad, etc. This essay asks you to form some skepticism and follow it up with research, open-mindedness, and impartiality. Amidst the research will be your informed, thoughtful judgments, blending research and personal insight. The Synthesis Essay will use traditional, more academic sources as well as some mainstream sources, blending a variety of perspectives and experiences. The essay requires at least 5 sources. The essay should, of course, demonstrate the skills developed in the course while also serving a personal interest or goal regarding the topic.

Participation

Participation begins with presence in the physical classroom and presence during class happenings. Participation is recorded every class meeting. At the end of the semester, I calculate the participation grade. For a high participation grade, students should seek to participate multiple times a class meeting for most meetings. If you have any questions or concerns regarding attendance, speak to me. Supplemental participation can be discussed as an option.

Bonus Points

Bonus point opportunities present during class activities. The higher the attendance, the higher the capacity to receive bonus points. For example, the class might be broken into groups and compete for bonus points during a class activity.

Course Policies

Note: These policies were designed and approved by section 1R3 on Aug. 24, 2026.

Attendance

After 5 freebie absences, each absence after that deducts 40 points. Potential make-up absence opportunities will be provided throughout the semester, but should not be relied on. Habitual tardiness can result in one or more absences.

Late Work Policy

Late work is not accepted unless an extension was arranged before the due date with the instructor beforehand via email or in person. If no extension was arranged, it makes the assignment grade a 0.

Class Communication

- Class Communication: Group Me.
- Instructor: you may send an email at any time; however, my replies will typically be during regular business hours. Therefore, you should plan your communication accordingly. If you have questions that are bound by a due date, you should try to contact me during regular business hours so that you get a response in time and/or contact a class member.

Technology

- Allow headphones when designated.
- Instructor has power to confiscate phones if needed during class time.

University Closure Practices

In the event of university closure for inclement weather conditions or emergency situations, students will be notified through official campus channels (MSU Alert, MSU Safety app, Postmaster emails, and website headers). When any schedule changes occur, I will update the weekly agenda and due dates in D2L. For this course, unless a change is posted to the course D2L News, assignments due during the closure will remain due as scheduled. Students who are unable to complete assignments due during a closure (for example, due to a power outage) will not be penalized, but will be expected to notify the professor of their situation.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: August 27, 2026
- Deadline to file for graduation: October 5, 2026
- Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” October 7, 2026
 - Refer to [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Academic Misconduct and Generative AI

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism is the use of another’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument (including text written by a generation system or artificial intelligence tool) in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing on the Works Cited page)—whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. At the very least, plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment; at worst, the consequence will be an F in the course. Offenders will be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy and the Dean of Students. Students have the right to appeal an alleged incident of Academic Dishonesty. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in [the Student Handbook](#), under Academic Dishonesty Procedure or through [the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

GenAI Policy Details

This course aims to teach ethical research and writing practices, with a focus on the writing process. The use of generative AI is inappropriate for this course. All work submitted for this course is subject to be scanned by plagiarism and AI checkers. If you use AI or other sources without accurate and consistent attributions, you will not receive credit for the assignment, but you will have the opportunity to rewrite the assignment for a lesser grade with guidance about proper attribution and citation (on the first occurrence). If this occurs a second time, you will receive a grade of “F” for the course. If you use AI despite this course’s policy but you cite it in your submission, it may go one of two ways. Depending on the percentage of the work done by AI, your grade will be calculated based on the level of work done independently or, if it is substantially done by AI, you will have to rewrite the assignment for a lesser grade, but not as low of a grade had you not cited the AI at all.

***Note:** there is no uniform policy on AI use at MSU. Make efforts to understand the policy for each course you take.

The myth of “AI is everywhere.”

Yes, AI does seem to be everywhere. However, it is up to the individual to engage or not with that AI. It is difficult to avoid AI in search engines. You have some options: 1. Type “-ai” at the end of your searches to remove AI results/overview. 2. Use AI overview as a step to get to actual sources. For example, use links that AI provides to get to the information rather than simply relying on the AI overview. 3. Use search engines that do not have AI incorporated, this includes library databases as well as websites like DuckDuckGo. Saying AI is everywhere encourages a passive, helpless mindset towards AI. We have the choice to use it or not, whether it is everywhere or not.

Why No AI?

Much like many talents and skills, mastering the foundation is vital. Should a surgeon know how to do the surgery without robotic assistance before relying on it? Who can check/verify work done by AI if no one knows how to do its work? Is it fair/ethical to require employees to use AI where you end up training the AI to do your job, eliminating your role entirely? What is the harm in thinking AI can do everything you can do and “better”? If you one day use generative AI for writing or researching (or any other tasks), how will you know what work is quality or accurate if you never learned for yourself in the first place? Beyond the job of teaching my students the skills and content of the course is my personal goal to help you all become strong students, workers, and, most importantly, people. My AI policies are not meant to police you, but rather to set you up for the most success and competency in whatever our future world looks like. While I personally believe in human work and the feelings of accomplishment and pride in that work, I recognize my students might have different feelings and priorities than me. Discussions and experimentation regarding AI in this class will occur; however, we will be doing this to learn more about AI. This work with AI will only occur together as a class, so do not forget the no AI

policy above. Whether or not you agree with my policy on no AI use, do not think that means we will not learn anything about it. This is my Rogerian approach (like our first essay) to AI.

I cannot stress enough how I care much more about what you have to say—with any errors, stumbles, or insecurities—than any chatbot. Don't forget: AI would not exist without human data. So don't let it/anyone tell you that AI can “do better.”

Combined Weekly Schedule for 0043 and 1143

****Note:** The schedule is subject to change. All changes will be made in D2L. Because of changes to the schedule, it is recommended that you follow the D2L posted schedule with daily homework and due da*

Week	0043	1143
UNIT 1 Week 1: Aug. 24 -28	- Complete Syllabus Terms/Contract - Literacy and AI Literacy - Watch: “AI Is Dangerous But Not for the Reasons You Think” - Watch: “Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator”	- Access Bedford Bookshelf - Set up Common Place Books (CPB) - Read: “On Procrastination” - CPB: On Procrastination Self-Reflection
Week 2: Aug. 31 - Sep. 4	- Discuss “The ABCDE of Writing” - Writing Environment/Ritual - Groups: “Experiences in Communication” Speeches - Strategies to Select Topics - Approve Topics	- Read: “Shitty First Drafts” - Read: “Experiences in Communication” - Rogerian Argument Essay Assignment - Bedford: Types of Argument
Week 3: Sep. 8 -11	* No Class Sep. 7 – Labor Day - Watch: “The Danger of a Single Story” - Reading like a Writer - Read: “Not Here to Make Friends” - Rogerian Class Debate	- Rogerian Purpose, Audience, & Outline - Create and Fill Outline - *Process Logs 1 & 2
Week 4: Sep. 14 -18	- Road Mapping - Adding Details Activity - Sample Rogerian Essays	- *Process Logs 3 & 4 - *Draft 1 Due (print & electronic)
Week 5: Sep. 21 -25	- Practice Peer Review with AI - *Peer Review “Boards” & Findings	- Introduce Rhetorical Case Study - Schedule Conferences - *Process Log 5--apply Peer R. - *Revised Rogerian Essay Due
UNIT 2 Week 6: Sep. 28 -Oct. 2	*Conferences – Review FB from Rogerian Essay – Prepare for Case Study – CPB Check-In	*Conferences *Process Logs 1 & 2 Due
Week 7: Oct. 5-9	- Introduce Synthesis Essay - Rhetoric	- Watch: “Why are People Starting to Sound Like ChatGPT?”

	- Watch: "The Colonization of Time" - Self-Reflection - Set Goals for Case Study - FOMO and Fads	- Read: "A Day in My Highly Optimized, Convenient Life" & "Social Media Trends and Consumerism" *Reflection Log 1
Week 8: Oct. 12 - 16	- Types of Sources - Using Sources/Lenses - Read: "Is This Kansas" - Read: "The Productivity Gospel"	- Read: "How Labels in Society Affect Our Perceptions of Ourselves..." - Reflect: Popular Culture vs. Psychology *Reflection Log 2 & 3
Week 9: Oct. 19 -23	- Reporting vs. Analysis - Works Cited - *Peer Review Synthesis Intro	- Introduce Creative Bibliography - Conclusions *Reflection Log 3 & 4 * Rhetorical Case Study Due
UNIT 3 Week 10: Oct. 26 -30	- Share Rhetorical Case Study Findings - Creative Bibliography - Researching Guide - Exploratory Research	- Watch: "When You Think You Are Right Even When You Are Not" - Read: "We Are All Confident Idiots" - Confirmation Bias and Forgone Conclusions
Week 11: Nov. 2 -6	- Read/Annotate: "Empathy and the Critic" - Bedford Synthesis Examples	- Research Time - *Process Logs 1 & 2 *Rhetorical Case Study Revision Due
Week 12: Nov. 9 -13	* Instructor gone on conference Nov. 11-13 - Work on Bibliography/Research	- Work on Bibliography/Research - *Process Logs 3 & 4
Week 13: Nov. 16-20	* Instructor gone on conference Nov. 18-20 - Incorporating Sources - Depth not Scope: "Consider the Lobster" - Consider the Lobster Debate	- "Annoying Ways People Use Sources" - *Process Logs 4 & 5 *Creative Bibliography Due
Week 14: Nov. 23-27	* No Classes Nov. 25-27: Thanks-giving Break - Work on Draft	* Synthesis Draft Due *Commonplace Book Due
Week 15: Nov. 30-Dec. 4	- Work on Draft - *Peer Review Presentations - Commonplace Books Returned	- Work on Draft - *Process Logs 6 & 7 *Synthesis Essay Due
Finals: Dec. 7-10	TBD?	TBD?

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Campus Resources and Policies

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

Please do not hesitate to speak with me and/or access these resources. They are here for a reason, just like you!

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

TASP's Learning Center is located on the first floor of the Moffett Library, and tutors are available for one-on-one sessions Monday-Thursday from 11 AM-7 PM. You don't need an appointment to use these services. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading. [See TASP's Webpage for more information.](#)

Access to Microsoft 365

All students can download Microsoft Office 365 free of charge using their MSU Texas student email address. To acquire Office 365, [visit MSU's Student Resources.](#)

University Computer Labs

The University provides four open computer labs with Microsoft Office & internet access.

- Clark Student Center: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)
- Dillard 146: Mon-Thurs 6 AM – 7 PM
- Moffett Library: Mon-Thurs 8AM – 10PM; Fri. 8AM-5PM; Sat 10AM-6PM; Sun 2PM-10PM
- Legacy Hall: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Explore resources on [Moffett Library's webpage](#) to learn how to best utilize the library.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the [Midwestern State University Catalog](#).

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from MSU may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. For information about refunds, refer to [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Campus Carry

For information on the University's Campus Carry policies, visit [Campus Carry](#).