



Course Syllabus:

Introduction to Critical Reading & Academic Writing

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

ENGL 1143
Sections 205/2Q2
Spring 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Kevin W. Johnson

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Office hours: MW 11:00am-12:00pm; TR 9:00am-10:30am; and by appointment

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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.

Course Goals

- Apply key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Engage in a writing process that includes invention, drafting, collaboration, and revision
- Use reading and composing for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical 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 and in contextually appropriate ways and follow a designated style guide
- Demonstrate proficient use of linguistic structures, including grammar and mechanics, through practice in composing and revising

THECB Core Course Objectives

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - To assess the student's critical thinking skills, the Synthesis rubric will be applied to the Synthesis Paper.
- Communication Skills
 - To assess the student's written communication skills, the Synthesis rubric

will be applied to the Synthesis Paper.

- Personal Responsibility
 - To assess ethical use of sources as a measure of personal responsibility, the Synthesis rubric will be applied to the Synthesis Paper.
- Teamwork
 - To assess the student's teamwork, the Peer Review Teamwork rubric will be used to assess each student's preparation for and participation in peer review workshops.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

The following texts are available to you as digital copies via Follett Inclusive Access. (See D2L note from Bookstore for more information.)

- Axelrod, Rise, B. et al. *Reading Critically, Writing Well*. Available from: VitalSource Bookshelf, (13th Edition). Macmillan Higher Education, 2022.
- Lunsford, Andrea, et al. *Everything's an Argument with Readings*. Available from: VitalSource Bookshelf, (10th Edition). Macmillan Higher Education, 2025.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring and homework help for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning Center provides tutoring support in a number of core courses and subject areas. Remember that you don't need an appointment to utilize these services. Check the [TASP webpage](#) for times.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the goals and objectives of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare students for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

All formal papers will run through Turnitin for an Originality Report and an AI Report. 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 may be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy and/or the Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support students' 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. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

For final grades, this class will not use the plus/minus grading system. The following numerical equivalents for final grades are used: A = 100-90%; B = 89-80%; C = 79-70%; D = 69-60%; F = 59-0. For individual assignment grades, an A+ = 98, A = 95, A- = 92; B+ = 88, B = 85, and so on.

Table 1: Percentages allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Description	Percentage
Writing Project 1: Rhetorical Analysis	You will plan, draft, and revise this essay. It will analyze the rhetorical situation and elements of a visual text.	15%
Writing Project 2: Summary/Response	You will plan, draft, and revise this essay. It will summarize and respond to a text.	15%
Drafting & Research Workshops for writing projects	Including working outlines/intro drafts (5%), annotated bibliography (5%), peer review sessions (5%), and library workdays (5%).	20%
Writing Project 3: Synthesis Paper	Longest paper (4-5 pages) that explores various perspectives on a topic of your choosing. You will plan, draft, and revise this paper. You will cite a variety of sources and show connections between them.	20%
Writing Remix Project	Digital remix of WP3 presented to the class	10%
Process & Participation	Including but not limited to reading response assignments, short writing & editing assignments, homework, class discussion activities, in-class planning exercises, quizzes, etc.	20%
Total	*****	100%

Mid-Term Grades

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, I will provide a Midterm Progress Report through Navigate. I will submit a grade for all students, not just those in danger of failing the course. Midterm grades will not be reported on your transcript; nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. They simply give students an idea of where they stand at the midpoint of the semester. Students earning below a C at the midway point should make an appointment with me and consider visiting the Learning Center for tutoring services.

Final Exam

The WP3 Remix Project replaces the final exam for this course.

Late Work

Late assignments (defined as work not submitted by the designated date and time posted in the D2L Dropbox/Submission folder) will be accepted within 48 hours of the original deadline, but a 10% penalty will be assessed upon the final grade of the assignment. Additionally, late work more than 48 hours after the original deadline will only be accepted with the instructor's assent (via email). A 15% penalty will be assessed in these cases. Late work submitted over three weeks after the deadline will NOT be accepted—no exceptions. If you are unable to come to class on the day an assignment is due, you should still upload it into the D2L Dropbox folder on time to avoid late paper deductions.

Submission Format and Policy

All formal assignments are to be typed, formatted, and outside sources documented according to MLA style. All formal papers will be uploaded into the appropriate D2L Dropbox folder.

By enrolling in this class, students expressly grant MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by students for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes. Please note that the D2L Dropbox folder will automatically run papers through Turnitin.com. Turnitin provides both an Originality Report and an AI Report.

Note: Students may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that already has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless they obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved in advance.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes/late registration: **January 28**

Deadline to file for graduation: **February 16**

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W": **April 29**

Check these dates on the [Academic Calendar](#).

For more information, refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#).

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Students are expected to be familiar with this platform as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. Students can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU homepage or the portal. For assistance, submit a help ticket [here](#).

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and arrive on time, as missed class sessions reflect upon your participation in discussions and assignments, participation which will impact your final grade. Students who miss over two weeks of class will see a grade penalty. Specifically, if you have an absence total (excused or not) of two weeks or more (5 or more class sessions), you will receive a grade penalty of 7.5% off of your overall grade. Each week beyond that will incur an extra 5% off of your overall grade.

If you need to miss several classes because of personal reasons (illness, death in the family, etc), you should alert the Dean of Students office and provide them with the necessary documentation so that they can verify the situation for all of your instructors.

The instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. Please understand that a student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor after a verbal or written warning.

Instructor Class Policies & Procedures

Since the textbook is an ebook, please bring your laptop or other electronic device to every class in order to access the course readings during discussion.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (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. Two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

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](#).

College Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License-to-carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

ENGL 1143 – Spring 2026 Schedule

Week One: January 20 – 23

Introduction to ENGL 1143

Course Syllabus and class expectations

Joining the Academic Conversation: “What is rhetoric? What is an academic argument? How are rhetorical concepts connected to critical reading and academic writing?”

Other Assignment/Activity:

Writing history (literacy narrative) turned in to D2L next week (details discussed in class on Thursday/Friday).

Week Two: January 26 – 30

Critical Reading and the Writing Process

Discussion of the basics of writing: thesis, organization, development, style.

Introduction to Writing Project 1 (WP1): Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual text.

Discussion of rhetorical strategies and design elements.

Logical fallacies.

Reading:

Lunsford, et al. Chapter 1, “Understanding Arguments and Reading Them Critically,” Pgs. 3-27.

Lunsford, et al. Chapter 5, “Fallacies of Argument.” Pgs. 77-91

Other Assignment/Activity:

Driven ad questions-- turned in next week (details discussed in class).

Week Three: February 2 – 6

Considering Analytical writing—reflect, inquire, explain, interpret, evaluate.

Analysis of visuals: Practice exercise with print ads.

Discussion of rhetorical “toolbox” including Aristotelian appeals, Design elements, and Berger questions.

Reading:

Lunsford, et al. Chapter 7, “Rhetorical Analysis,” Pgs. 105-121.

Lunsford, et al. Chapter 6, “Argument Meets AI,” Pgs. 94-104.

Other Assignment/Activity:

Reflective response.

Week Four: February 9 – 13

Considering Analytical writing (continued)

Discussion of rhetorical “toolbox” and visual rhetoric.

The “Art/Ad” continuum.

Writing an Analysis Paper

Review of the writing process and academic essay structure.

Discussion of rhetorical analysis example drafts.

Reading:

Axelrod, et al. "The Writing Process," Pgs. 16-35.

Student-written example of "Rhet. Analysis of a Visual Text" paper

Other Assignment/Activity:

Write draft of intro and working outline.

Week Five: February 16 – 20***Writing an Analysis Paper* (cont.)**

Plagiarism/paraphrasing examples.

Intro to MLA documentation style.

Peer Review & Drafting Workshop incl. instructor reviews for Essay One: Preliminary Draft of intro and outline.

Other Assignment/Activity:

Friday, February 20: Writing Project One due to D2L.

Week Six: February 23 – 27

Conferences with instructor re: WP1.

See sign-up sheet to make appointment. Meetings in Prof. J's office, which is BW234.

Week Seven: March 2 – 6***Synthesis writing within Academic arguments***

Preparation & Practice for Writing Project 2: S&R paper

Reading:

Chapter 11, "Multi-genre writing," pgs. 481-540

The Atlantic article.

Spring Break: March 9 – 13**Week Eight: March 16 – 20*****Synthesis writing within Academic arguments* (cont.)**

Synthesis exercises: summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting

Discuss Chapter 11, Multi-genre writing

Week Nine: March 23 – 27

Peer Review & Drafting Workshop (incl. peer & instructor reviews for WP2)

Friday, March 27:

Writing Project Two due to D2L.

Week Ten: March 30 – April 3

Introduction to Synthesis & Research writing

What is a Synthesis Paper?

Considering a researched report

Elements of academic research

Reading:

Chapter 12, Strategies for Research & Documentation, pgs.543-569.

Week Eleven: April 6 – 10

Finding & Evaluating sources for a synthesis paper

Using your library

LIBRARY Tutorial (meet in library; exact location TBA)

Reading:

Chapter 12, Strategies for Research & Documentation, pgs.567-593.

Other Assignment/Activity:

Library Search Quiz (in-class and at-home)

Week Twelve: April 13 – 17

Finding & Evaluating sources for a synthesis paper (cont.)

Library research days--Work on Annotated Bibliography

Peer Review & Drafting Workshop for WP2 in library

Other Assignment/Activity:

Working outline and annotated bibliography for WP3

Week Thirteen: April 20 – 24

Drafting a synthesis paper

MLA and other styles of documentation.

Source synthesis exercises.

Remix planning workshop.

Week Fourteen: April 27 – May 1

WP 3 Remix (in lieu of Final Exam)

Week Fifteen: May 5 – 8

WP 3 Remix (in lieu of Final Exam)

Week Sixteen (Finals Week) May 9 – 15

(No Final Exam)

Saturday, May 9:

Writing Project Three (The Synthesis/Research Paper) due to D2L.