



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Reading and Writing about Culture

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities & Social Sciences

ENGL 1153- 206 (9:30am-10:50am, DB 131)

ENGL 1153- 252 (12:30pm-1:50pm, DB 175)

Spring 2026, Jan. 20-May 16

Contact Information

Instructor: Amber Hunsaker

Office: Bea Wood Hall 228

Office hours:

Monday: 12pm- 1pm

Tuesday: 11am-12:00pm

Wednesday: 12pm-1pm

Thursday: 11am-12:00pm

Friday: 12pm-1pm

By Appointment

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Course Description

This course will provide students an opportunity to develop critical reading and cultural analysis skills in order to achieve deeper understanding of a variety of texts and artifacts. Students will explore the various factors informing the production of texts and learn how to conduct research in order to gain experience exploring different perspectives on select works and themes. The course will include several opportunities for students to articulate their interpretations and insights in essay assignments, which will be assessed for clarity, insight, and understanding.

Course Goals

- Read various literary texts united by a common theme or topic
- Apply knowledge of literary analysis to interpret literary texts
- Engage in a writing process that includes invention, drafting, and revision
- Write various genres of academic essays
- Find, evaluate, and synthesize credible sources in support of a research paper
- Use sources ethically and in contextually appropriate ways and follow a designated style guide
- Demonstrate proficient use of Standard Written English

THECB Core Course Objectives and Assessments

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - To assess the student's critical thinking skills, the Research Project rubric will be applied to the Literary Research Project.
- Communication Skills
 - To assess the student's written communication skills, the Research Project rubric will be applied to the Literary Research Project.
- Personal Responsibility
 - To assess ethical use of sources as a measure of personal responsibility, the Research Project rubric will be applied to the Literary Research Project.
- 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.

Course Information

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- Bedford Bookshelf- Found on D2L.
- Weir, Andy. *Project Hail Mary*, Penguin Random House, 2021. (You may purchase/rent a hard copy, a digital copy—like a Kindle copy, or even the audiobook. Each have their own pros and cons).
- PDFs/Links found linked in D2L.

This course's required eBook is part of MSU Texas' Courseware Access and Affordability Program. Students are charged for the course materials on their Business Office account. 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 the MSU Bookstore at jenny.denning@msutexas.edu if you have questions about opting out.

A Gmail account (like MSUTexas account) to collaborate & access digital materials

Regular computer and internet access, including access to D2L.

Instructor Class Policies

Because we and our community members have diverse bodies, experiences, and needs, and because language helps shape our world, as a community, we must reject language and behaviors that denigrate others based on any identity category. In this intentional and inclusive learning space, hate speech and any form of harassment, discrimination, or violence will have serious consequences and won't be tolerated.

We will demonstrate respect and consideration of perspectives that differ from our own. Realize that there is a lot we don't know about each other, and our choice of words in discussing social, political, and economic issues matters a great deal. As a group, we should acknowledge that, while ignorance is not an excuse for cruelty or dismissiveness, we all make mistakes as we learn, so we should be willing to forgive & learn from these situations.

Learning with Generosity: This course encourages the discussion and consideration of topics that may be uncomfortable. We can work through discomfort, and this class should be a safe space for learning and exploration. I will provide content warnings as needed, and if you have a need for warnings before particular kinds of content, please let me know.

The professor considers this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is the professor’s expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

Grading

Course Grade –Final course grades correspond to the amount of points you earn throughout the semester. Table 1 indicates available points, and Table 2 indicates the final letter grade associated with those points.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Daily Reading Quizzes x15 (10 points each)	150
Reading Journals x3 (50 points each)	150
Reader Response Essay	100
Collaborative Project	250
Literary Research Project	250
Final Letter of Reflection	100
Total Points	1000

*The Presentation and Assessment Letter may be replaced with excessive Learning Journal points.

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900 to 1000
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

Grading Policy

If you complete the assignment following the instructions and meeting assignment expectations, then you earn a 100%. If you submit an assignment, but it does not meet the assignment expectation, you will earn 50% of the available points. If you do not submit any work, or if the work you submit is in any way plagiarized (including using AI generated text... or text you yourself did not create), you will receive a 0 for that assignment.

If you receive a 50%, you may revise the assignment using the feedback left for you to meet the assignment requirements. Revising may earn you a full 100%. If you revise and the assignment still doesn’t meet the requirements, you will earn up to 25% of points back.

If you receive a 0, you must meet with me and explain why you deserve a chance to earn points back. If you receive the opportunity to revise, you may earn up to 50% points on the assignment.

Along with any revised work, you must complete a reflection paragraph explaining what you revised and how it made your work better. I want you not only to rely on your colleagues and yourself for assessment and revision advice, but to build strategies of self-assessment that function apart from a teacher's approval. For example, closely examining the assignment page and ensuring that your writing meets the assignment expectations.

This grading scheme is meant to foster a collaborative, supportive environment and to relieve some of the pressure of writing anxiety. You're not writing to impress me. You're writing to learn about different styles, genres, and rhetorical concepts. Demonstrating that you're learning these will warrant you a passing grade on assignments.

Extra Credit

Because of my grading style, there is not "Extra Credit." If you complete the work assigned as directed, you will earn a passing grade.

Revised Work

If you receive a failing grade on an assignment, you will have a chance after each major Writing Assignment to revise your work and re-submit it for revision points. I will tell the class when revisions for each assignment are due back. Typically it's within a week after I return your graded assignments.

Late Work

Late assignments, defined as work not submitted by the designated date and time posted in the D2L Dropbox/Submission folder, will not be accepted. The D2L Dropboxes will indicate that assignments are due at 11:59pm, but the dropboxes will close at 8:00am the following morning. As long as you submit the assignments before the dropboxes close, they are not considered late. Late or missed work will receive a zero grade. 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.

If you need an extension, please email me no later than 12 hours before the deadline.

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and be on time. After two (2) weeks' worth (4 missed classes) of unexcused absences, you will start to lose 20 points from your accumulated points for each class you miss. Unexcused absences include you being sick or needing to take a day for yourself. Excused absences include school-related functions or extreme circumstances.

If you need to miss multiple sessions for personal/health reasons, you should alert the Dean of Students office and provide them with the necessary information so that they can verify the situation for me and your other instructors, then

I appreciate it if you notify me via email in advance if you will not be able to make class. Consider it your responsibility to be present and prepared for class in order to succeed and maximize your

learning. This is a face-to-face course, dependent on in-class discussion and group work. So if you want to attend class virtually, I suggest you enroll in an online section.

University Resources

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Check the [TASP Website](#) for their schedule.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

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

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](#).

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

University Information/Policies

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: Friday, Jan. 23

Deadline to file for graduation: Feb. 16

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

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

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. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

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). The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. This includes work generated by AI.

All formal papers will run through the Turnitin for an originality 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 will be reported to the Chair of the Department of English, Humanities, and Philosophy. Please understand that students have the right to appeal an alleged incident of Academic Dishonesty. More information about this policy and appeal procedure can be found on page 55 of the Student Handbook <https://msutexas.edu/student-life/assets/files/handbook.pdf>

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

Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and 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."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

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

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Schedule

Week	Do this BEFORE Class	Doing this IN Class	Due in D2L
Week 1 T 1/20	Classes begin	Introduction to Class	Complete “Welcome Survey”
R 1/22	<i>Reading and Writing about Literature</i> - Ch. 1 (Introduction to Literature) and 2 (Good Reading)	Read “The Egg” together Discuss literary elements	-

Week	Do this BEFORE Class	Doing this IN Class	Due in D2L
Week 2 T 1/27	<i>Reading and Writing about Literature</i> - Ch. 5 (Writing about Stories) Read “More Room” by Judith Ortiz Cofer- PDF in D2L Read “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin	Discuss literary elements Discuss writing about literature	-
R 1/29	<i>Reading and Writing about Literature</i> - Ch. 3 (The Writing Process) Read “Salvation” by Langston Hughes- PDF in D2L	Discuss literary elements Discuss writing about literature	-
Week 3 T 2/3	Read “Big Boy” by David Sedaris	Discuss literary elements Discuss writing about literature	-
R 2/5	-	Work Day	Reader Response Paper Due
Week 4 T 2/10	<i>PHM 1, 2, 3, 4</i>	Introduce Collaborative Project	
R 2/12	<i>PHM 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</i>	Listen to Ch. 10, 11, and 12 in class	
Week 5 T 2/17	<i>PHM 13, 14, 15, 16</i>	Discuss <i>PHM</i>	-
R 2/19	<i>PHM 17, 18, 19, 20</i>	Discuss <i>PHM</i>	Reading Journal 1
Week 6 T 2/24	<i>PHM 21, 22, 23, 24</i>	Discuss <i>PHM</i>	-
R 2/26	<i>PHM 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30</i>	Discuss <i>PHM</i>	Video Check In Due
Week 7 T 3/3	-	Collab. Project Work Day	SMMD
R 3/5	-	Collab. Project Work Day	-

Week	Do this BEFORE Class	Doing this IN Class	Due in D2L
Spring Break 3/9 – 3/14	Spring Break – No classes	Spring Break – No classes	-
Week 8 T 3/17	-	Collab. Project Work Day	-
R 3/19	-	Presentations	<i>PHM</i> Collaborative Project
Week 9 T 3/24	Read “Prologue- <i>I Am Malala</i> ” by Malala Yousafzai	Researching Literature	MOVIE NIGHT watching <i>Project Hail Mary</i>
R 3/26	Read “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel García Márquez Read “Champion of the World” by Maya Angelou	Researching Literature	Reading Journal 2
Week 10 T 3/31	<i>Reading and Writing about Literature</i> - Ch. 8	Brainstorming Literary Research Project	-
R 4/2	No Class- Holiday Break	No Class- Holiday Break	-
Week 11 T 4/7	-	Conferences	-
R 4/9	-	Conferences	-
Week 12 T 4/14	-	-	-
R 4/16	-	Learning How to Peer Review Writing about Literature	-
Week 13 T 4/21	Bring Draft of Literary Project to class	Start Peer Review	-
R 4/23	-	Complete Peer Review	Peer Review Documents
Week 14 T 4/28	-	Work Day	Literary Research Project

Week	Do this BEFORE Class	Doing this IN Class	Due in D2L
W 4/29	Last day for "W", 4:00 p.m.	--	-
R 4/30	-	Student Choice	-
Week 15 T 5/5	-	Student Choice	-
R 5/7		Student Choice	Reading Journal 3
Finals Week 5/12	-	-	Final Reflection Letter

Note: The schedule may be altered throughout the semester to better accommodate students' learning and mastery. Major changes to the calendar will be announced on D2L and in class.

Some days are left intentionally blank to allow some flexibility in our schedule. We will still meet for class every day on this schedule.