



Course Syllabus:

Introduction to Critical Reading & Academic Writing

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

ENGL 1143 Section 113
Fall 2025

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Nivens

Office: BeaWood 220

Student Office hours: MW 1:00-2:00pm; TR 9:30-11:00pm; 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

Lunsford, Andrea and Michael Brody. *Let's Talk with Readings*. Norton, 2023. eBook Inclusive Access. *The Little Seagull Handbook*, 5th ed. Norton. 2024. eBook Inclusive Access.

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 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.

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
4 Response Papers (RP)	Short papers (2 paragraphs) that summarize and respond to a reading.	20%
Writing Project 1: Position Paper (PP)	You will plan, draft, and revise this essay. It will make a claim supported with evidence and fully developed reasons.	15%
Writing Project 2: Rhetorical Analysis (RA)	You will plan, draft, and revise this essay. It will analyze the rhetorical situation and elements of a visual text	15%
Annotated Bibliography (AnnBib)	Summary and evaluation of each source for WP3.	10%
Writing Project 3: Synthesis Paper (SP)	Longest paper (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 Project 4: Remix Project	Digital remix of WP3 presented to the class	10%
Writing Workshops	3 Peer Review Workshops and 1 Instructor Conference	10%
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 WP4 Remix Project replaces the final exam for this course.

Extra Credit

Extra credit offerings are announced at the discretion of the instructor.

Late Work

Late assignments (defined as work not submitted by the date and time posted in D2L) will be accepted, but they will receive at least a 10% deduction. Additionally, no late work will be accepted

more than 48 hours after the original deadline without making arrangements with me. If students are unable to come to class on the day an assignment is due, they should still upload their work 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: **August 28**

Deadline to file for graduation: **September 22**

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” **November 24** Check the date 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 students attend class and arrive on time. I will take daily attendance via an “attendance question” at the start of class. If a student accumulates more than two weeks’ worth (MWF 6 classes) of absences (excused or not) the missed instruction will make it difficult to excel in the class. Students who miss class will not be directly penalized, but they will miss out on opportunities for participation and explanations of assignments that could impact the final grade. Students who need to miss several classes because of personal reasons or illness should alert the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities and provide them with the necessary documentation so that they can verify the situation and notify 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."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

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

Course Schedule:

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

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 1 M 8/25	*****	Review: Syllabus and Calendar Introduce Course Theme: Community and Belonging
W 8/27 How do we find community among differences?	Read LT Ch 1 Listening Ch 3 Engaging Respectively with Others	Discuss Ch 1 and 3 Line Game Activity
F 8/29	Read LT Ch 5 Developing Academic Habits Appiah "Should I Hang Out with Someone Whose Political Views I Hate?"	Discuss reading
Week 2 M 9/1	*****	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
W 9/3	Read LT Ch 2 Thinking Rhetorically	Discuss Ch 2
F 9/5	Read LT Kolb "Life Is about to Come with Subtitles"	Discuss reading
Week 3 M 9/8	Read LT Ch 6 Reading to Understand, Engage, & Respond Ch 11 Summarizing & Responding	Discuss Ch 6 & 11 Introduce Response Papers
W 9/10	Read LT Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" Write: Response Paper 1	Response Paper #1 Due – submit to D2L Dropbox Discuss reading
F 9/12	Read LT Ch 8 Writing Processes	Discuss Ch 8 Writing Introductions & Thesis Statements

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 4 M 9/15	Read LT Ch 9 Arguing	Discuss Ch 9 and reading Introduce Writing Project 1: Position Paper
W 9/17	Read LT Ch 26 Using Languages & Dialects Rhetorically Lane, "Do We Have to Teach Standard English?"	Discuss readings WP1: Planning Workshop
F 9/19	Read LT Ch 25 Writing Great Sentences	Discuss Sentence Patterns Clear and Concise Sentences
Week 5 M 9/22	Write WP1 rough draft and bring 2 copies to class	Peer Review Workshop – bring 2 copies of draft to class
W 9/24 Where do we find connections?	Read LT Ch 10 Analyzing Write WP1 Final Draft	Discuss Ch 10 WP1 Position Paper Due – submit to D2L Dropbox
F 9/26	Review Ch 10	Continue Ch 10 Practice analysis
Week 6 M 9/29	Read Dee, "How Pop Culture Helps Us Understand Ourselves and Each Other" Garcia, "Listening to Taylor Swift in Prison" Write Response Paper 2	Response Paper #2 Due – submit to D2L Dropbox Discuss readings Introduce WP2 Rhetorical Analysis
W 10/1	Review Ch 10	Sample Paper/Practice Analysis
F 10/3	Find visual for analysis	WP2 Planning Workshop

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 7 M 10/6	Write WP2 rough draft and bring two copies to class	Peer Review Workshop – bring 2 copies of draft to class
W 10/8	Work on revisions	Revising and Editing Workshop
F 10/10	Write WP Final Draft	WP2 Rhetorical Analysis Due – submit to D2L Dropbox NO CLASS – OUT OF TOWN
Week 8 M 10/13	Read LT Dyson, “Beyonce. Amen” Coaston, “What Can Sports Teach Us?”	Response Paper #3 Due – submit to D2L Dropbox NO CLASS – OUT OF TOWN
W 10/15 How can we learn more about our communities?	Read LT Ch 16 Starting with Questions, Finding Sources	Discuss Ch 16 Introduce WP3 – Synthesis Paper and Ann Bib Community Problem Brainstorm
F 10/17	Read LT Ch 17 Evaluating Sources	Meet in Moffett Library Computer Lab – 2 nd floor
Week 9 M 10/20	Read LT Ch 18 Building an Annotated Bibliography	Discuss Annotated Bibliography instructions and sample
W 10/22	Read LT Ch 30 Let’s Chat: AI Begin looking for sources	Response Paper #4 – submit to D2L Dropbox Discuss using AI ethically Annotated Bibliography Workshop
F 10/24	Read LT Ch 20 Quoting, Summarizing, Paraphrasing	Discuss Ch 20
Week 10 M 10/27	Work on Ann Bib	Individual Conferences
W 10/29	Work on Ann Bib	Individual Conferences

Week	Before Class	During Class
F 10/31	Work on Ann Bib	Individual Conferences Ann Bib Due – submit to D2L Dropbox
Week 11 M 11/3	Read LT Ch 19 Synthesizing Ideas	Discuss Ch 19
W 11/5	Work on W3 Draft Review MLA Guidelines	Review MLA Guidelines
F 11/7	Work on W3 Draft	WP3 Synthesis Paper Workshop - Outline
Week 12 M 11/10	Write WP3 rough draft and bring two copies to class	Peer Review Workshop – bring 2 copies of draft to class
W 11/12	Work on revisions	Mini conferences – revision workshop
F 11/14	Work on revisions	Mini conferences – revision workshop
Week 13 M 11/17	Read LT Ch 27 Designing What You Write	Discuss reading Introduce WP4 Remix Project
W 11/19	Read LT Ch 28 Using Visuals	Discuss visuals and multi-modal writing
F 11/21	Write WP3 Final Draft	Synthesis Paper Checklist WP3 Synthesis Paper due – submit to D2L Dropbox
Week 14 M 11/24	Consider Remix	Remix Planning Workshop
W 11/26	*****	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
F 11/28	*****	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Week 15 M 12/1		WP4 Presentations

Week	Before Class	During Class
W 12/3		WP4 Presentations
F 12/5		WP4 Presentations
Week 16 FINALS	*****	NO FINAL EXAM