Course Syllabus:

Introduction to Critical Reading and Academic Writing

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities & Social Sciences

ENGL 1143- 116 (MWF, 12:00pm-12:50pm, PY 205)

Fall 2025, Aug. 25- Dec. 11

Contact Information

Instructor: Amber Hunsaker
Office: Bea Wood Hall 228
Office hours:
      Monday: 10am- 12pm
      Wednesday: 10am-12pm
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      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 write a variety of text. 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.

The purpose of this course is to develop your skills in critical reading and thinking and in evidence-based writing. These skills will be relevant in many aspects of your life and your work. Here you will get to choose what you will research and write about, and you'll be asked to be open to new perspectives.

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 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 & 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

This course fulfills a Communication Core requirement and will assess the following:
- To assess these skills, the Synthesis rubric will be applied to the Synthesis Essay.
    - Critical Thinking
    - Communication
    - Personal Responsibility
- Teamwork: The Peer Review Teamwork rubric will be used to assess each student's preparation for and participation in a peer review workshop.

Course Information

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Lunsford, Angela and Michael Brody. *Let's Talk . . . with Readings, 2nd Edition*. Norton, 2025. (Provided as an e book; Access 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
Learning Logs	200
Critical Reflection Essay	100
Research Project Topic Selection	50
Research Matrix	100
Peer Review- Synthesis Essay	100
Synthesis Essay	300
Research Presentation	50
Final Assessment Letter	100
Total Points	**1000**

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 (specific details given with each assignment) 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, earning you up to 75% of credit.

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.

Generative AI Policy

If you choose to use a generative AI tool for this class, you are required to include a full transcript of your session(s) with each submission—every prompt you entered and every piece of AI output you received.

- If you turn in an essay that is clearly just AI output pasted into MLA format, you will receive a 0.
- If your essay shows partial AI use (even a small amount), that is still prohibited. However, I recognize the temptations of new technology, so here is how consequences will work:
  - If your submission appears to be mostly AI-generated, or if an originality checker indicates that your response is more than 20% AI-generated, I will investigate further. If your response and other evidence cannot demonstrate that the work you submitted is more than 70% original, you won't receive credit for the assignment.
  - If you submit work that contains some AI influence (Less than 20%) but you have been transparent and included the transcript or explained how you used AI, I will take that into account when deciding on consequences.

This policy isn't to shame anyone. Instead, this policy is designed to create learning potential, a space for honoring you and your authentic creativity, critical thinking, and written expression. Note that there is no uniform policy on AI use at MSU. Make efforts to understand the policy for each course you take.

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. If you earned a 50% on an assignment, you can revise for a full 100%. 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. If you received a zero on an assignment due to AI generated text or other plagiarism issues, you will have an opportunity to redo the assignment, using your own work, for half credit on the assignment. Here's how I see it: I've been very honest and open about what I expect. If you cheat, you forfeit your right to earn full credit. But I want you to practice and learn, so I will award you half credit for resubmissions if you plagiarized or use GenAI.

Extra Credit

There is not "Extra Credit" per se because you will have chances to revise for more credit than you originally received.

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 unless previously communicated with me. 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 on an assignment, please send me an email immediately. I will always allow extensions, so long as you communicate with me. Even if you email me at 2am, assume that I will grant you an extension. In your email, please propose a new deadline that you think is a reasonable extension. Usually 24-48 hours after the deadline is acceptable. Requesting more than a 3 day extension will require a pretty good explanation for your need of that that extra time.

You cannot miss the deadline and then ask for an extension. You will receive a zero if you ask for an extension after the dropbox closes unless you have an extreme circumstance to discuss with

me.

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and be on time. After two (2) weeks' worth (4 missed classes) of unexcused absences, I reserve the right to start reducing your points by 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, though 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.

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.

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](#).

University Information/Policies

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: Thursday, Aug. 28th
Deadline to file for graduation: Monday, Sept. 22
Last Day to drop with a grade of "W": Monday, Nov. 24
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.

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, receiving an automatic zero (0) on assignments AI generated text was submitted for.

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

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).

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

Course Schedule

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
M- 8/25	-	Introduction to Class	-
W- 8/27	Read Let's Talk (LT) Ch. 3 and Ch. 5	Conversations about AI	Complete "Welcome Survey"
F- 8/29	Read Let's Talk (LT) Ch. 6	Discuss/Practice Critical Reading/Annotating Read "AI has rendered traditional writing skills obsolete. Education needs to adapt."	-
M- 9/1	No School	No School	-
W- 9/3	Read LT Ch. 2 Watch: "How AI causes serious environmental problems (but might also provide solutions)" Watch: "AI's hidden climate costs | About That"	Discuss/Practice Rhetorical Situation Discuss Practice Reading and Rhetoric	-
F- 9/5	Read. Ch. 9 Read "AI to the Rescue"	Finish Reading and Discussing Rhetoric	
M- 9/8	Read LT. Ch. 8 Read "Reading 4"	Discuss Academic Writing	-

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
W- 9/10	Read "The Dark Side Of AI: Tracking The Decline Of Human Cognitive Skills"	Introduce Reflective Reasoning Assignment	-
F- 9/12	-	Examine Example Essay	-
M- 9/15	Read Ch. 11	Parts of an essay	-
W- 9/17	-	Parts of an Essay	-
F- 9/19	Read Ch. 24	Parts of an essay	Learning Log 1
M- 9/22	Read Ch. 25	-	-
W- 9/24	-	Work Day	
F- 9/26	-	Work Day	Critical Reflection Essay
M- 9/29	Read *LT* Ch. 16	Introduction to Research/ Synthesis	-
W- 10/1	-	Practice/Topic Exploration	-
F- 10/3	Read LT Ch. 7 Watch Smarter Every Day Video	Academic Ethos	-
M- 10/6	Read "Navigating the Dangers of the Web"-- pg. 689-694	Academic Ethos	-
W- 10/8	Read *LT* Ch. 17	Library Instruction/ Finding and Evaluating Sources	Research Project Topic Selection
F- 10/10	-	Finding and Evaluating Sources	
M- 10/13	Read LT Ch. 10	Discuss Analyzing	-

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
W- 10/15	-	Practice Analyzing	-
F- 10/17	-	Practice Analyzing	Learning Log 2
M- 10/20	Skim *LT* Ch. 22	Formatting Sources	-
W- 10/22	-	Formatting Sources	-
F- 10/24	-	Work Day	Research Matrix
M- 10/27	Read *LT* Ch. 19	Informative thesis statements, putting it together	-
W- 10/29	Read *LT* Ch. 20	Informative thesis statements, putting it together Integrating Sources in Writing	-
F- 10/31	Read *LT* Ch. 21	Integrating Sources in Writing	-
M- 11/3	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	-
W- 11/5	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	-
F- 11/7	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	- Learning Log 3-
M- 11/17	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences Prepare for Peer Review	-
W- 11/19	Bring a Complete Draft to class	Peer Review	-
F- 11/21	Bring Peer Review Notes	Finish Peer Review	Peer Review- Synthesis Essay

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
M- 11/24	Work Day	Work Day	Synthesis Essay
W- 11/25 and F- 11/27	No Class Happy Thanksgiving!	No Class Happy Thanksgiving!	-
M- 12/1	Read *LT* Ch. 27 and 28 Prepare Presentation	Presentations	-
W- 12/3	Prepare Presentation	Presentations	-
F- 12/5	Prepare Presentation	Presentations	Learning Log 4
T- 12/8-11	Finals Week	Finals Week	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.