



Course Syllabus:

Introduction to Reading & Writing about Culture

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

ENGL 1153 Sections 208 and 251
Spring 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Nivens

Office: BeaWood 220

Student Office hours: MW 9:30am -11am; TR 2pm-3pm; 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

- 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

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- 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.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Textbooks available through Follett Access *Bedford Bookshelf* ISBN: 9781319530297

- Gardner, Janet E. and Joanne Diaz. *Reading and Writing about Literature: A Portable Guide*. 6th ed. Bedford/St. Martins, 2025.
- Selections from: Lawn, Beverly and Joanne Diaz eds. *40 Short Stories*. 7th ed. Macmillan Learning, 2025.
- Selected poems and a nonfiction novel excerpt linked in D2L.

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 In Class Essays	Short papers written during class (2-3 paragraphs) that respond to a prompt directly related to a reading.	10%
Writing Project 1: Analysis Essay	Longer paper (3 pages) that explores a literary element related to a work of fiction.	15%
Writing Project 2: Comparison Essay	Longer paper (3 pages) that compares at least two poems.	15%
Annotated Bibliography	Summary and evaluation of each source for WP3.	10%
Writing Project 3: Literary Research Paper	Longest paper (5 pages) that explores a research question related to a literary reading.	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%
Final Exam	Reflective Essay Exam	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

TR 9:30 – Final Tues, 5/12 8:00am

TR 12:30 – Final Thurs, 5/14 10:30am

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 lose 10% of the final grade. 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: **January 24**

Deadline to file for graduation: **February 17**

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” **April 20**. 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 three weeks’ worth (TR 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 T 1/20		Introduction to Course Syllabus “My Name” Sandra Cisneros Discuss course theme: “Love, Lies, and Homicide”
R 1/22	Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 1 and 2 – Reading <i>4OSS</i> Reading Short Stories Closely	Discuss: Close reading & Annotation Asking questions “Girl” Jamaica Kincaid Practice Annotation
Week 2 T 1/27	Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 4 Common Writing Assignments /Summary and Response Ch 5 – Writing about Stories/Plot and Character “Sweat” Zora Neale Hurston	Discuss: Plot and Character “Sweat”
R 1/29	Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 5 – Writing about Stories/Point of View <i>4OSS</i> “The Yellow Wallpaper” Charlotte Perkins Gillman	In Class Essay #1 Discuss: Point of View “Yellow...”

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 3 T 2/3	<p>Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 5 – Writing about Stories/Characterization Ch 3 Writing Process</p> <p><i>40SS</i> “A Good Man is Hard to Find” Fannery O’Conner</p>	<p>Discuss: Writing Process Characterization “A Good Man...”</p> <p>Introduce: WP #1 Analysis Essay</p>
R 2/5	<p>Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 5 – Writing about Stories/Setting</p> <p><i>40SS</i> “A Rose for Emily” William Faulkner</p>	<p>In Class Essay #2</p> <p>Discuss: Setting “A Rose...”</p>
Week 4 T 2/10	<p>Read: <i>40SS</i> Writing about Short Stories “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” Joyce Carol Oats</p>	<p>Discuss: “Where...”</p> <p>WP#1 Writing Workshop</p>
R 2/12	<p>Write: WP#1 Rough Draft – bring two printed copies of draft to class</p>	Peer Review Workshop #1
Week 5 2/17	<p>Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 6 Writing about Poetry</p> <p>Submit: WP#1</p>	<p>WP#1 DUE</p> <p>Discuss: Elements of Poetry Selected Poems – Love</p>
2/19	<p>Find: Lyrics to your favorite love/hate song</p>	<p>In Class Essay #3</p> <p>Share: Song Lyrics</p> <p>Introduce: WP#2 Comparison Essay</p>

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 6 2/24	Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 9 – Literary Criticism & Literary Theory	Discuss: Literary Theory Selected Poems – Betrayal Comparison Essay Planning Workshop
2/26	Read: From <i>In Cold Blood</i> : The Last to See Them Alive	Discuss: Nonfiction “The Last...”
Week 7 3/3	Write: WP#2 Rough Draft – bring two printed copies of draft to class	Finish: “The Last...” Peer Review Workshop 2
3/5	Write: WP#2 Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 7 – Writing about Plays	WP#2 DUE Discuss: Elements of Drama
*****	SPRING BREAK	*****
Week 8 3/17	No homework	Read & Discuss: Trifles, Susan Glaspell
3/19	No homework	Read & Discuss: Trifles, Susan Glaspell Review: Sample Student Paper
Week 9 3/24	Write: Response Paper #4 Read: <i>RWL</i> Ch 8 – Writing a Literary Research Paper (Finding & Evaluating Sources)	In Class Essay #4 Introduce: WP#3 Literary Research Paper Discuss: Research Process Finding and Evaluating Sources

Week	Before Class	During Class
3/26	Read: <i>RWL Ch 8 – Writing a Literary Research Paper (Working with Sources)</i>	Discuss: Quotations, Paraphrase, Summary Research Planning Workshop
Week 10 3/31	Find: Possible Sources	Finding Sources & Ann Bib Workshop
4/2	*****	HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
Week 11 4/7	Read: <i>RWL Ch 8 – Writing a Literary Research Paper (Avoiding Plagiarism and Understanding AI)</i>	Discuss: Avoiding Plagiarism Approaches to Research Sample Papers
4/9	Read: 40SS – Students' Choice Write: Annotated Bib	ANN BIB DUE Discuss: Students' Choice Short Story
Week 12 4/14	Work on Drafts	Conferences
4/16	Work on Drafts	Conferences
Week 13 4/21	Write: WP#3 Rough Draft – bring two printed copies of draft to class Submit: Rough Draft for instructor feedback	Peer Review Workshop 3
4/23	Work on revisions	Mini Conferences Introduce: Writing Project #4: Remix

Week	Before Class	During Class
Week 14 4/28	Submit: WP#3	WP#3 DUE Remix Planning Workshop
4/30	Work on Remix Presentation	Presentations 1-6
Week 15 5/5	Work on Remix Presentation	Presentations 7-12
5/7	Work on Remix Presentation Submit: WP#4 Remix DUE	WP#4 DUE Presentations 13-18
Week 16 FINALS WEEK		FINAL EXAM TR 9:30 – Tues, 5/12 8:00am TR 12:30 – Thurs, 5/14 10:30am