



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Critical Reading and Academic Writing
Spring 2024
ENGL 1143

Section-206 TH 8:00am- 9:50am, PY 205
Section-209 TH 12:30pm- 1:50pm, BW 210
Section-2Q3 TH 2:00pm-3:20pm, BW 210

Contact Information

Instructor: Amber Hunsaker, M.A.
Office: BW 228
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E-mail: amber.hunsaker@msutexas.edu
Office hours:

Tuesday	11:00am-12:30pm
Wednesday	10:00am-12:00pm
Thursday	11:00am-12:30pm
Zoom/Other Times	By Appointment

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to develop your skills in critical reading and thinking and in evidence-based, persuasive 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.

We are experimenting this semester in a number of ways: we will adjust to changes in our environment, we are using new textbooks and resources, and we are using contract grading, which may be unfamiliar to you. This system is briefly described on the following pages.

Additionally, this semester may be unpredictable for all of us. More than ever, it will be important for you to pay attention to and prioritize your needs. Being a university student demands work, sacrifice, and even some discomfort on occasion, but it should never mean that you have to neglect your own well-being. Communicate with me about your needs related to this class, and take care of yourself this semester.

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

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Ingraham, Lauren, and Jeanne Law Bohannon. *The Writer’s Loop: A Guide to College Writing*, with Achieve (Online Resource). Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2020. (Provided as an e-book; Access in D2L).

[Please see linked here a letter from the bookstore about opting out of the digital textbook.](#)

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

Regular computer and internet access, including access to D2L and a Webcam/microphone (for Zoom meetings when/if necessary).

Submission Format and Policy

All formal assignments are to be typed and formatted – and outside sources documented - according to MLA style. Some minor assignments may be submitted as a hard copy in class. All formal papers must be uploaded into the

D2L Dropbox folder. Note: You 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 you obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved in advance if necessary.

Grading

Letter	Numerical
A	895-1000
B	795-894
C	695-794
D	595-694
F	0-594

Major (Required) Tasks	Points
FE (Formal Essay) 1- Rhetorical Analysis	100
FE 2- Annotated Bibliography	75
FE 3- Synthesis/Research Essay	200
FE 4- Argumentative Position	100
Research Presentation	50
Timed Writing- Position (Final Exam)	75
10 Weekly Reports (Minimum Entries)	200
TOTAL Required Assignments	800
Investment Tasks	
	Points
5 Extra Weekly Reports	Up to 100
Achieve Grammar Study Plan	Up to 100
Reading Quizzes*	Up to 100
TOTAL Possible Points	x/1000

*Note about Reading Quizzes: Quizzes will close at 11:59pm on the day of which the reading is required. For example, if I ask that you read chapter 5.1 on a Thursday, the reading quiz for Chapter 5.1 will close at 11:59pm on that same Thursday.

Mid Term Grades: To help students track their progress, I will provide all students' Midterm Grades through WebWorld. Midterm grades will not appear on transcripts or be calculated in GPAs. They give you an idea of where you stand halfway through the semester. Students earning a C or below should visit with me and visit the Writing Center.

Grade Policy

Through contract grading in this course, the default grade is a B. If you do all that is asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked, work through the processes we establish, do all the labor asked of you, then you'll earn a B in the course. It will not matter what I or your colleagues think of your writing, only that you are listening to our feedback openly. If you miss class (do not participate fully), turn in assignments late, forget to do assignments, or do not follow the labor instructions precisely, you will get a lower course grade. You can earn an A by completing additional "Investment Tasks" that contribute to the class community and to your learning.

You may expect to learn "proper grammar" in this class, but linguists argue that every language and dialect has a distinctive grammar and that no one grammar is inherently better or more correct. American universities rely on "Standard (American) Academic English" (SAE) to determine "college readiness," but this ["standard" is a false one rooted in intentional gatekeeping and discrimination based on race, class, and citizenship status.](#) In this class, your professor will assume that SAE is a false and flawed standard. Your language practices are relevant. You will not be chastised for using grammars other than SAE. If you would like to learn to use SAE more persuasively, we can work on that, but you are also welcome to use your language experience in ways that you and your peers and community members would find persuasive and trustworthy; these goals are more practical and more inclusive than striving for an arbitrary and false notion of correctness. Grammar police be warned. (See also [CCCC's 2020 Demand for Black Linguistic Justice.](#))

Assessment and Revision

I will provide written or oral feedback on drafts prior to submission as needed, and I will inquire about your writing progress regularly. 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.

Academic Dishonesty

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.

Conferences

You should participate in at least three writing conferences with me or a writing center tutor this semester prior to the last week of class. You may use these meetings for any course-related discussion, but your formal and research papers will be especially useful topics.

Contacting Me

Email is the best way to contact me. In the body of your email, indicate the course and section number you're in. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week and 48 hours over the weekend. If you need a response more urgently, please indicate that your question is "Urgent" in the subject of your email. You may also stop by my office during office hours. If you cannot meet during my office hours, you may request a Zoom conference.

Course Community

Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility: 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.

As a professor, my commitment to equity, inclusion, and accessibility in this classroom and on this campus begins with acknowledging the ways that our institutions (academic and otherwise) have excluded, neglected, and marginalized many community members based on race, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, national origin, language, ethnicity, sex, ability status, socioeconomic status, age, body type, and other aspects of identity, and continues with seeking to understand and resist those failures. To create a safer, more just community, we should seek to critique and counteract both individual and systemic/structural oppression. This means educating ourselves about systems of oppression and marginalization, fostering conversation and learning about those topics, developing practices that respond to the needs of historically marginalized communities and individuals, and

holding our communities accountable for learning and becoming more equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

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 brave 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.

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.

Courtesy and Hospitality: The college classroom should be a vibrant environment that fosters creativity, discussion, and intellectual growth. You have the freedom to create the kind of intellectual community you desire. Included here are behaviors that I believe will help foster a generative community:

- Pay attention. This means when the instructor or classmates are addressing the class you are attentive to the speaker and NOT (1) talking, (2) using electronic devices for unrelated tasks, or (3) sleeping. If emergencies or mitigating circumstances mean that you may need to do one of these things, please be considerate by quietly excusing yourself.
- Be respectful. You are expected to be respectful to your instructor, your classmates, and yourself. If you witness behavior that is less than respectful, you are welcome to hold the community accountable by calling us in.
- Be prepared & responsible. Know what is happening in class by checking the schedule and your emails. Bring materials and assignments to class when needed. Submit work on time, and communicate with me in mitigating circumstances.
- Participate. Since you are working to become an expert in your field, the class and our scholarly community stand to benefit and learn from your contributions. Practice now by sharing what you know and are learning when it is relevant.
- Communicate. Come by or call me during office hours if you are struggling with an assignment, have issues with course material, or want additional guidance or feedback. You can also email me.

This Course as a Contract

This course operates on a labor-based grading contract theory adapted from that of composition scholar Asao Inoue. [Here is his original contract example](#). Keep in mind we will have different assignments and different point distribution, but the theory of Labor-Based grading is the same for our class. If you do all that is

asked of you in the manner and spirit it is asked, then you'll earn a B in the course. This is meant to foster a collaborative, supportive environment and to relieve some of the pressure of writing anxiety. You'll get feedback from me and your colleagues which you can use to improve your work and to take risks, but you won't get traditional grades on major assignments. Instead they will be marked on a 100%, 50%, or 0% basis. If you meet the basic expectations laid out in the assignment, you'll earn full credit for it. If you submit some work, but it does not meet the assignment expectation, you will earn 50% of the available points. If you do not submit any work, or the work you submit is in anyway plagiarized, you will receive a 0 for that assignment. If you receive a 50%, you may revise with additional feedback so you will earn a portion of the points available for that task. If you receive a 0, you must meet with me and explain why you deserve a chance to earn points back. 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.

While the default grade for the course is a B, you can improve upon your overall grade by doing more than is required. The primary options for doing so are outlined above in the Labor Log description and in the grade distribution chart on page 3. If you do not earn all of the points for a major assignment, this is also where you can make up for that in addition to revising. If you have missed or incomplete work or work that does not meet the expectations for revision, editing, or originality, and you choose not to make that up with timely revision or additional labor, you will forfeit the default B for a lower grade, depending on the amount and quality of missing or incomplete work.

By staying in this course and attending class, you accept this contract and agree to abide by it. I (Ms. Hunsaker) also agree to abide by the contract, and administer it fairly and equitably.

Late Assignment

Late assignments, defined as work not submitted by the designated date and time posted in the D2L Dropbox/Submission folder, will be accepted for 48 hours after the original deadline, but they will lose 10% of the final grade each day it's late. Late work submitted after 48 hours after the original deadline will receive a 0 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 to avoid late paper deductions.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: **Jan. 19th**

Deadline to file for graduation: **Feb. 12th**

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W": **April 24th**

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

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

We will use D2L to access most course materials including the syllabus, the textbook & Achieve resources, schedule updates, assignment sheets, PowerPoints, your feedback and grades, and other materials. You will also submit formal assignments and find announcements on D2L, so please check it daily, especially before our class meets. Google Drive will also be used as a collaborative space and to store class resources. We may use Zoom as a need-to-use basis, such as individual conferences.

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and be on time. If you have a total of more than four (4) weeks' worth (8 missed classes) of absences excused or not, the highest grade you can receive in the course is a 70%. So if you stop attending class half way through the semester, you may continue to submit work, but you will not receive higher than a "C" grade as your final. Often, students who do not attend class do not successfully complete the assignments.

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.

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.

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).

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 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](#).

Beyond complying with the ADA, I want to ensure that this course is accessible as possible to all students. If you have problems accessing campus sites or learning materials (physical or digital), don't hesitate to talk with me about how we might improve that. I will often refer to uses of technology that I have not covered during class, and I am happy to provide one-on-one or workshop-based support for students who are unfamiliar with platforms or programs I reference.

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 prohibits 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.

Writing Proficiency Requirement

All students seeking a Bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they have 1) completed 6 hours of Communication Core and 2) earned 60 hours. Students may meet this requirement by passing either the Writing Proficiency Exam or English 2113. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the Writing Proficiency Office website (<https://msutexas.edu/academics/wpr/>) or call 397-4131.

Grade Appeal Process

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

Notice

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

Tutoring at MSU

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, Writing tutors are available Monday through Thursday from 11:00am to 6:00pm and Sunday 2:00pm to 9:00pm. You don't need an appointment to use these services. Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading.

For Distance Education students, TASP has partnered with Thinkingstorm, an online tutoring company that provides you with high-quality, 24/7 tutoring support. Located at the top of your D2L course page, select the tutoring tab to book an appointment with a tutor.

Safe Zone Statement

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.

Writing Proficiency Requirement

All students seeking a Bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they have 1) completed 6 hours of Communication Core and 2) earned 60 hours. Students may meet this requirement by passing the Writing Proficiency Exam, passing two Writing Intensive Courses, or passing English 2113. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the Writing Proficiency Office website at <https://msutexas.edu/academics/wpr/> or call 397-4131.

