

# English 1143: Introduction to Critical Reading & Academic Writing Fall 2025

Professor Todd Giles

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Class Times: TR 9:30-10:50 (DB177) or 12:30-1:50 (DB317)

Office Hours: MWF 10:00–11:00 & TR 11:00–12:00 & by appointment

## Required Texts

- **N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.** Albuquerque: U of NM P, 1976. (9780826304360)

## Texas Core Curriculum

This course fulfills a core requirement for **Communication**. As such, the course will assess the following learning objectives:

- Critical Thinking, Communication, & Personal Responsibility - To assess these skills, the Synthesis rubric will be applied to the Synthesis Essay.
- 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 a peer review workshop.

## 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.

Using a diverse array of nature writing as a catalyst for improving our own critical thinking, reading and writing skills, we will explore how language affects the construction and shaping of our concepts of place, identity, culture, and the environment. By the end of this course, you will have a more sophisticated understanding of the complex web of social, personal, and rhetorical processes that make up written discourse. Along the way, we will

- 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

### Course Requirements

Assignments	Grade Percent
In-class writing/Homework/Discussion	25%
Nature Writing Essay (Part 1)	15%
(Part 2)	10%
Ways of Seeing Essay (Part 1)	5%
(Part 2)	10%
(Part 3)	10%
Rainy Mountain Essay (Part 1)	5%
(Part 2)	10%
(Part 3)	10%

### Grading Policy

In this class, the following numerical equivalents for final grades are used: A = 100-90%; B = 89-80%; C = 79-70%; D = 69-60%; F = 59-0%.

### Daily Writing and Class Activities

Your course grade is directly tied to keeping up with the readings, which means we will have daily in- and out-of-class writings, including brief in-class writing prompts, reading quizzes, in-class small group work, and various short homework assignments. These will be graded on a plus/x/check/minus scale: **(+)** for doing a thorough job (100%); **(x)** for a good job (85%); **(√)** for completing the work in an acceptable fashion (70%); **(-)** for not completing the work or for obvious lack of effort (0%). On occasion, some assignments might, depending on length, count for more than one daily grade. As your grade is determined by your presence and attention to the daily readings, you cannot make up in-class writing or homework.

### Class Preparation and Participation

To succeed at your daily writing, you must show that you've closely read, have at least a cursory understanding of the material, and address, to the best of your ability, the writing prompts. I do not expect you to remember exact quotations, but specific examples from the work always help get the point across. It is also good to try to tie in any relevant terminology or critical concepts from class discussions. As you read, take notes and underline/highlight what you believe are key passages in the text (a climactic scene, crucial lines for understanding the work, a summary of the argument, etc.), or things you have trouble understanding. **\*Come to each class with comments and questions!**

### Plagiarism / Artificial Intelligence Policy

Plagiarism (including AI-generated writing) is the use of someone else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation,

whether you use that material in a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. **\*All incidents of plagiarism will an automatic F, be reported to the department chair, and kept on file. A second incident of plagiarism in class by the same student will result in the student receiving an F for the course.**

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

### **Attendance Policy**

Because this is a discussion-oriented course and the work we do in class is designed to help you understand the readings and improve your critical reading, thinking and writing skills, you must attend class to do well. By failing to regularly attend class you will not understand the critical terminology and concepts necessary to successfully complete the daily writing assignments. You are in college; come to class.

### **Tardiness Policy**

Your behavior in the college classroom should be no different than what will be expected of you as a working professional. Regularly arriving late to class is disruptive to your instructor and your classmates; as such, it will not be tolerated. Students who arrive after the daily writing assignments have begun will automatically receive a minus.

### **Electronics Policy**

Cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. If a student is caught using an electronic device during a quiz, they will automatically receive a zero. Likewise, each time a student is seen playing with their cellphone or iPod during class, they will automatically lose credit for any in-class writings, quizzes, homework assignments due that day. I will tell students they are losing credit for the day for the first few weeks of class, after which time it is not my responsibility to alert them.

Other disruptive behavior, including coming in late on a regular basis, chatting with classmates during class discussion or in-class writing, sleeping, or any other behavior not conducive to a mature learning environment, will first receive a warning; if the behavior continues, an instructor drop will be initiated.

### **Recording Devices**

The use of recording devices, including cellphones, is strictly prohibited during class unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA guideline. Reason: academia should provide a space for free-flowing ideas and discussion; surveillance of any sort infringes upon your classmates' and your professor's freedom of expression.

## Grade Appeals

I will be happy to try to explain the rationale behind any grade; however, I absolutely do not negotiate, haggle, or argue about grades. Part of my job is to evaluate your work and to assign a written grade to it. I do that to the best of my ability the first time.

## Tutoring Support

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring 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. Please see our schedule for more information about times and offerings. Remember that you don't need an appointment to utilize these services. Some departments also provide tutoring. Check the "Tutoring at MSU" tab in the portal for more information about all campus tutoring opportunities. 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 Distance Education Tutoring course to book an appointment with a tutor. If you are a distance education student (i.e. you live more than 50 miles from MSU and are in all online courses), but you do not see this course pop up under your courses, please contact Ashley Hurst.

**Access to Microsoft 365:** All students are able to [download Microsoft Office 365](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office?ms.officeurl=getoffice365?ms.officeurl=getoffice365) free of charge using their MSU Texas student email address. (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office?ms.officeurl=getoffice365?ms.officeurl=getoffice365>)

**University Computer Labs:** The University provides four open computer labs throughout the week that feature access to Microsoft Office Suite for writing and internet access for research.

Location	Hours
Clark Student Center	24 hours (Mon-Sun)
Dillard 146	Mon-Thurs 6:00 am–7:00 pm
Moffett Library	Mon-Thurs 8:00 am–10:00 pm; Fri. 8-5; Sat: 10pm-6 pm; Sun: 2:00 pm-10 pm
Legacy Hall	24 hours (Mon-Sun)

## Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative; I reserve the right to amend it with oral notice in class. If you anticipate a problem with the due dates, please speak with me well in advance.

### Week 1

- 8/26 Class Introduction; Punctuation Made Simple PowerPoint (Pp) (D2L)
- 8/28 Discuss nature writing genre and Paper # 1; Writing Terms Pp (D2L)

### Week 2

- 9/2 Edward Abbey Pp (D2L); Edward Abbey, "The First Morning" (Handout); Reading Strategies Pp (D2L)
- 9/4 Terry T. Williams Pp; TTW, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" (D2L); "Secret Cold War Tests" (D2L); Rhetorical Analysis Pp (D2L)

### Week 3

- 9/9 In-class writing workshop for Paper # 1; Personal Narratives Pp (D2L)
- 9/11 Annie Dillard, "Heaven and Earth in Jest" and "Living like Weasels" (D2L); Analyzing Arguments Pp (D2L)

### Week 4

- 9/16 **Peer Review Part I Nature Writing Essay (Bring 1 hardcopy)**; Revision Plan Pp (D2L)
- 9/18 John Muir Pp (D2L); John Muir, "A Wind-Storm in the Forests" (D2L)

### Week 5

- 9/23 Visual Literacy workshop; **Nature Writing Essay (Parts I & II) Due**
- 9/25 Discuss Paper 2, "Ways of Seeing"; Mary Austin Pp (D2L); Mary Austin, "My Neighbor's Field" (D2L)

### Week 6

- 9/30 Joy Williams, "One Acre: On Devaluing Real Estate to Keep Land Priceless"; Sallie Bingham, "A Woman's Land" (D2L)
- 10/2 In-Class Writing Workshop, Part I "Ways of Seeing" essay (Bring pic of your artwork)

### Week 7

- 10/7 Gary Snyder poems (D2L)
- 10/9 **Peer Review Part I "Ways of Seeing" (Bring draft to class)**

### Week 8

- 10/14 Aldo Leopold Pp (D2L); Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (D2L)
- 10/16 **Peer Review Parts II & III (Bring draft to class)**

### Week 9

- 10/21 Mary Oliver poems (D2L)
- 10/23 Mary Oliver continued

### **Week 10**

- 10/28 **Ways of Seeing in-class final revisions workshop (Bring draft to class);**  
Review Revision Plan Pp (D2L)
- 10/30 In-class intro to *The Way to Rainy Mountain*; **Ways of Seeing Parts I-III Due**

### **Week 11**

- 11/4 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (ix-41)
- 11/6 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (44-63); Discuss *Rainy Mountain* paper

### **Week 12**

- 11/11 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (66-89)
- 11/13 In-class writing workshop for Part 1 of *RM* Project

### **Week 13**

- 11/18 **Part I of Rainy Mountain Project Due**; Begin researching and drafting Part II in class
- 11/20 Linda Hogan poems (D2L)

### **Week 14**

- 11/25 Linda Hogan continued
- 11/26 **Gobble gobble!**

### **Week 15**

- 12/2 Peer Review workshop (Bring 1 copy of your working draft)
- 12/4 Final draft workshop (Bring 1 copy of your final draft)