Syllabus: Intro to Critical Reading & Academic Writing | Spring 2025
ENGL 1143-206 | TR 12:30-1:50 PM | PY 205
ENGL 1143-2R5 | TR 2-3:20 PM | PY 205

Contact Information

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Office hours: MF 12-1, TR 1-2:30 & By Appt.

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. A grade of C or better is required in this course.

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

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.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Both textbooks are provided as eBooks via Inclusive Access in D2L. You won't buy them separately!
- *LT* - Lunsford, Andrea, and Michal Brody. *Let's Talk with Readings*, Norton, 2023.
- *LSH* - Bullock, Richard, et al. *The Little Seagull Handbook*, Norton, 2023.

Grading System & Policies

Portfolio Grading System

This course uses a portfolio grading system, which aims to emphasize the writing process, foster a collaborative, supportive environment, and relieve some writing anxiety. You'll get feedback which you can use to improve throughout the process. For each phase of the portfolio, you will receive a checklist indicating criteria for each component. If you receive an "Unsatisfactory" mark on any component, you may request the opportunity to revise any component to meet expectations. You can also earn credit for additional, ungraded activities by including them in your Learning Log, which will be submitted periodically throughout the semester.

Table 1: Points Allocated per Assignment

Assignments	Points	Description	Due Date
Phase 0 ePortfolio	50	Start your ePortfolio & propose a research topic.	
Rhetorical Analysis	100	In an academic essay, analyze and respond to a research-based visual on your chosen topic.	
Phase 1 ePortfolio	100	Demonstrate your writing process on the rhetorical analysis essay by sharing the materials you used to plan, draft, and revise the essay.	
Synthesis Matrix	100	Gather your research on your chosen topic, providing citation information, brief summaries, and CRAAP test results for SEVEN sources.	
Phase 2 ePortfolio	100	Demonstrate your writing & research process on the synthesis matrix by sharing the materials you used to find, select, and evaluate sources.	
Synthesis Essay	150	In an academic essay, synthesize your research findings from a variety of perspectives on a current issue.	
Phase 3 ePortfolio	200	Demonstrate your writing process on the Synthesis essay by sharing the materials you used to plan, draft, and revise.	
Peer Review Feedback (2)	100	Provide thoughtful, constructive feedback to peers based on assignment criteria (50 points each).	
Learning Log	100+	Throughout the semester, use your Learning Log to document your writing process and log your ungraded work for the class in order to earn credit.	Each Phase
Total Points	1000		

Table 2: Total Points for Final Grade

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

Acceptable Submission Format and Process

Formal assignments are to be typed and formatted with all sources documented according to MLA style guidelines. Formal papers will be uploaded to the D2L Assignment folder. By enrolling in this class, students expressly grant MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" includes but is not limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes.

> *Note*: You may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that 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.

Revision

You may revise and resubmit any coursework within 2 weeks of receiving feedback and prior to finals week for additional feedback and a new assessment. Grade revisions are negotiated on a case-by-case basis, and all should be preceded by a revision plan with the help of the instructor.

Mid-Term Progress Report

At mid-term, I'll share a progress report with advisors, support staff, and you. These do not appear on transcripts or affect GPAs. Students earning Cs or below should visit with me and TASP.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments, defined as work not submitted to the designated site within 2 hours after the deadline, may be accepted for credit if you consult with me within two business days of the deadline, at the discretion of the instructor. If you anticipate you may have difficulty meeting a deadline, request an extension at least 24 hours in advance. If you have difficulty submitting or are unsure if your submission was successful, email me with your work attached and explain the issue.

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Plagiarism is the use of another's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument (including text written by a generation system or artificial intelligence tool) in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing on the Works Cited page)–whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. 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 and the Dean of Students. Students have the right to appeal an alleged incident of Academic Dishonesty. Find more information about the policy and appeal procedure on page 55 of [the Student Handbook](#).

Use of AI or Writing Technologies

The use of AI is not allowed in this class. Turnitin does have an AI detector, but it is not 100% accurate. Therefore, if you use AI at any stage in the writing process, you MUST state in the comment section of your submission how you used it (in detail). If an originality checker indicates that your response is more than 20% AI-generated, I will investigate further, and if your response and other evidence indicates that the work you submitted is not more than 80% original, you will not receive credit for the assignment. Note that there is no uniform policy on AI use at MSU. Make efforts to understand the policy for each course you take.

Instructor Class Policies

Class Communication - Email & GroupMe

Before asking questions via GroupMe or email, check D2L and our course syllabus and schedule. If the answers you seek are not provided, use GroupMe for questions and conversation about class activities, deadlines, and any issues that others in the class may know. This will allow quicker responses and provide reminders for others.

Email is the best way to contact me about your own performance or attendance. Allow 2 business days for email responses. All emails you send for academic purposes should be revised and edited, including a greeting, body paragraph(s), and closing, to meet professional expectations for emails. For all correspondence with your instructors, indicate your full name, course and section number.

Attendance Policy

Punctual, engaged attendance is crucial to your success in this class and in college. More than two weeks' worth of unresolved absences (MW/TR: 4 classes) will be grounds for the instructor to drop you from the course. Any absences are likely to affect your performance in the course, and it's your responsibility to be present and prepared for class to maximize your learning. If you must miss class for any reason, you may resolve absences by communicating with your instructor. If you must miss multiple sessions for any reason, alert the Dean of Students office so they can verify for instructors.

***Unresolved Absence**: Absences about which you did not communicate to the instructor prior to or within two days of its occurrence.

***Resolved Absence**: Absences about which you email your instructor prior to or within two business days. Emails must explain what actions you will take to stay on track in the course.

CARE for Class Community

Together, we'll decide what it means to show that we CARE about our own education and that of our classmates. CARE stands for Communicative, Accountable, Respectful, and Engaged. As a class, we'll describe specific behaviors and practices that correspond with those characteristics:

- Communicative: address tensions; getting to know each other; having an open mind (avoid immediate judgment & assumptions; join in & speak up; take time to consider before responding; willingness to be wrong; offer different perspectives; leaving space for responses & sharing talk time;
- Accountable: reading, studying, & preparing for class; meeting deadlines; applying concepts & skills; asking for help when needed; resilience (don't give up!); plan ahead & be proactive w/ deadlines; understand assignment & expectations; [Prof: give help when asked; take time to clarify & explain when needed; & make time outside of class when appropriate; consider students perspective re: deadlines & requirements; assess based on curriculum & class material (discuss assignments & rubrics in advance);
- Respectful: Raise hand to request talk time from another speaker; try to make eye contact w/ speaker & nonverbal listening cues (nodding, affirming); avoid talking over others; nonverbal affirmations for agreement (until your turn); account for diverse perspectives & experiences;
- Engaged: mindful of body language & energy (try to stay open); silence devices (DND if possible); headphones only when appropriate; being prepared for class & staying apprised of updates; giving and receiving constructive criticism

Learning with Generosity

As a community, we have diverse bodies, experiences, and needs. Our differences are strengths and we should strive to learn from them. To learn in a safe environment, we must ardently reject language and behaviors that denigrate others based on identity. In this learning space, hate speech, harassment, discrimination, & violence are not tolerated. This course encourages discussion of difficult topics. We work through discomfort and create a brave space for learning by showing respect for others and considering diverse perspectives. There is a lot we don't know about each other, and our word choice in discussing social & political issues matters! Ignorance is not an excuse for cruelty or dismissiveness, but we all make mistakes as we learn, so we should be willing to forgive & learn from these situations.

Course & Campus Resources

eBook Access

This course's required eBook is part of MSU Texas' Courseware Access and Affordability Program. Students are charged for 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 jenny.denning@msutexas.edu (MSU Bookstore) if you have questions about opting out.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

TASP's Learning Center is located on the first floor of the Moffett Library, and tutors are available for one-on-one sessions Monday-Thursday from 11 AM-7 PM. 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. [See TASP's Webpage for more information](#).

University Computer Labs

The University provides four open computer labs with Microsoft Office & internet access.
- Clark Student Center: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)
- Dillard 146: Mon-Thurs 6 AM – 7 PM
- Moffett Library: Mon-Thurs 8AM – 10PM; Fri. 8AM-5PM; Sat 10AM-6PM; Sun 2PM-10PM
- Legacy Hall: 24 hours (Mon-Sun)

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. Explore resources on [Moffett Library's webpage](#) to learn how to best utilize the library.

D2L & Google Drive

You will use D2L to access most course materials including the syllabus, textbook, announcements, schedule updates, assignment sheets, slideshows, feedback on writing, and other materials. You will

also submit formal assignments and discussion board posts 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.

Access to Microsoft 365

All students can download Microsoft Office 365 free of charge using their MSU Texas student email address. To acquire Office 365, visit MSU's Student Resources.

College Policies

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.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: January 24, 2025
Deadline to file for graduation: February 17, 2025
Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" April 30, 2025

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University MSU Catalog.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from 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. For information about refunds, refer to Drops, Withdrawals & Void.

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.

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](#).

Overview Schedule

***Notice**: Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. A more detailed, live version of the schedule is posted on D2L.

Weeks	Topics/Activities/Assignments	All Deadlines: 11:59 PM in D2L
Wk 1: 1/21-1/24	Understanding the Course, Rhetorical Situations	
2: 1/25-1/31	Reading Rhetorically, New Media Design, & Example ePortfolios	
3: 2/1-2/7	Writing Process, Topic Selection, Analysis, & Arguments, Media Literacy	2/7: Phase (Ph.) 0 ePortfolio
4: 2/8-2/14	Genre, Style, Documentation, & Editing	
5: 2/15-2/21	Reflecting on Writing, Peer Review	2/21: Peer Review 1
6: 2/22-2/28	Research Skills: Finding, Evaluating, & Documenting Sources, CRAAP Test	2/24: Rhet. Analysis 2/28: Ph. 1 ePortfolio
7: 3/1-3/7	Incorporating Research: Synthesis Matrix & Practice	
	SPRING BREAK	
8: 3/17-3/21	Drafting and Revising Synthesis Matrix	
9: 3/22-3/28	Troubleshooting & Completing Synthesis Matrix	
10: 3/29-4/4	Planning & Developing Synthesis Essay	3/31: Synthesis Matrix 4/4: Ph. 2 ePortfolio
11: 4/5-4/11	Drafting & Troubleshooting Synthesis Essay	
12: 4/12-4/16	Peer Review Synthesis & Revising Synthesis	
13: 4/21-4/25	Editing Synthesis	4/25: Peer Review 2
14: 4/26-5/2	Reflect and Demonstrate Learning: Workshop ePortfolios	
15: 5/3-5/9	Showcase ePortfolio	5/5: Synthesis Essay 5/8: Ph. 3 ePortfolio
Fin 5/10-5/15	Finals Week: No Final Exam	