



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Critical Reading and Academic Writing

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities & Social Sciences

ENGL 1143- 205 (9:30am-10:50am, DB 178)

Spring 2025, Jan. 21-May 15

Contact Information

Instructor: Amber Hunsaker

Office: Bea Wood Hall 228

Office hours:

Monday: 12pm- 1pm

Tuesday: 11am-12:30pm

Wednesday: 12pm-1pm

Thursday: 11am-12:30pm

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

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*. Norton, 2023. (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	300 (up to 400)
Rhetorical Response Peer Review	25
Major Writing Assignment- Rhetorical Response	100
Research Project Explanation	50
Major Writing Assignment- Research Matrix/Annotated Bibliography	100
Major Writing Assignment- Synthesis Paper	200
Synthesis Paper Peer Review	50
Research Presentation*	50
Research Project Reflection	75
Final- Assessment Letter*	50
Total Points	1000

*The Presentation and Assessment Letter may be replaced with excessive Learning Log points.

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, 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.

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.

Extra Credit

There is not "Extra Credit" per se, but you have the option to earn extra points on Learning Logs.

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. 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, please email me no later than 12 hours before the deadline.

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. 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.

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and be on time. After two (2) weeks' worth (4 missed classes) of unexcused absences, you will start to lose 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, thu

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: Friday, Jan. 24

Deadline to file for graduation: Monday, Feb. 17

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" Wednesday, April 30

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.**

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
T- 1/21	-	Introduction to Class	Complete "Welcome Survey"
H- 1/23	Read Let's Talk (LT) Ch. 5	Discuss/Practice Critical Reading/Annotating Read "Should I Hang Out with Someone Whose Political Views I Hate?"- Ch. 31, pg. 587-589	-
T- 1/28	Read Let's Talk (LT) Ch. 3 Read "I'm a Conservative Who Believes Systemic Racism is Real"-- Ch. 31, pg. 539-541 Read "Since When Have Tress Existed Only for Rich Americans?" — Ch. 34, pg. 739-745	Discuss/Practice Rhetorical Situation Discuss Practice Reading and Rhetoric	-
H- 1/30	Read LT Ch. 2 Read " Do We Have to Teach Standard English in the Classroom?— Ch. 32, pg. 622-625 Read "How Colleges Tell Student-Parents They Don't Belong" (Linked to PDF)	Discuss Practice Reading and Rhetoric	-
T- 2/4	Read LT. Ch. 7	Discuss Academic Writing Introduce Rhetorical Response Assignment	-
H- 2/6	-	Parts of an Essay	Learning Log 1
T- 2/11	-	Parts of an essay	-
H- 2/13	-	Learn Peer Review	-
T- 2/18	Bring completed draft of Rhetorical Response to Class	Rhetorical Response Peer Review	-
H- 2/20	-	Work Day	Rhetorical Response

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
T- 2/25	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 14	Introduction to Research/ Synthesis Practice/Topic Exploration	-
H- 2/27	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 4 and 6 Watch Smarter Every Day Video Read "Navigating the Dangers of the Web"-- pg. 689-694	Academic Ethos	-
T- 3/4	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 15	Library Instruction/ Finding and Evaluating Sources	Research Project Explanation
H- 3/6	-	Finding and Evaluating Sources	Learning Log 2
T- 3/11	No Class-Spring Break	No Class-Spring Break	-
H- 3/13	No Class- Spring Break	No Class- Spring Break	-
T- 3/18	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 9	Discuss Analyzing	-
H- 3/20	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 20	Formatting Sources	Research Matrix/Annotated Bibliography
T- 3/25	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 17	Informative thesis statements, putting it together	-
H- 3/27	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 18	Integrating Sources in Writing	-
T- 4/1	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 19	Integrating Sources in Writing	-
H- 4/3	-	-	-
T- 4/8	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	-
H- 4/10	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	-
T- 4/15	If possible, bring device to work on essay.	Conferences	Learning Log 3
H- 4/17	No Class- Holiday Break	No Class- Holiday Break	-
T- 4/22	Bring a Complete Draft to class	Peer Review	-
H- 4/24	Bring Peer Review Notes	Finish Peer Review	-
T- 4/29	-	Work Day	Synthesis Paper
H- 5/1	Read <i>LT</i> Ch. 28	-	-
T- 5/6	Prepare Presentations	Presentations	Research Reflection

Date	Do this BEFORE Class	Do this IN Class	What to turn into D2L
H- 5/8	Prepare Presentation	Presentations	Learning Log 4
T- 5/13	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.