

Reasoning and Research: Investigating What it Means to Be Human

English 1320.407: First-Year Writing II

Fall 2026 | University of North Texas



Instructor: Amber Walters-Molina (she/her)

Class times: Asynchronous Online

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Office Hours: By Appointment Only

Office Location: Teams

It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.

—Sherlock Holmes, “A Scandal in Bohemia” 1892

Course Description

What questions warrant further investigation? What does it mean to conduct research? How do critical thinking and reasoning impact research? What roles do media, technology, and identity play in shaping research? Who determines the legitimacy of research in academia—and beyond? And, how can novice researchers establish their ethos and contribute to academic and general public knowledge with their research?

In ENGL 1320, you will be introduced to invention strategies, reading strategies, and writing approaches that will help you thrive as writers in a university setting and beyond. With an emphasis on brainstorming, critical reading, analysis, and revision, you will practice genre conventions, gain rhetorical knowledge, and develop a framework for producing persuasive writing about issues that are important to you. One of the broadest goals of this course is to help you become comfortable with strategies for making your writing compelling to the audiences you want to reach. Defining, explaining, persuading, finding, and evaluating good sources—these are all ways to provide insight into topics that you want to share with other people.

ENGL 1320 will prepare you for a wide range of writing expectations, including those that demand research, evidence, and careful argument. Using Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories as a framework for thinking about inquiry, we will examine how observation, questioning, evidence, inference, and revision work together in the process of research. Like Holmes, you will learn to look closely, ask productive questions, follow evidence, test your assumptions, and develop conclusions that you can explain and defend.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify literary genres, conventions, and devices.
- Identify relationships between primary texts and their adaptations with intertextuality and allusion
- Evaluate ideas in a text, the implications, and the relationship to ideas beyond it.

- Write clear, close-reading essays that analyze literary devices and their effects on a passage.
- Write a research-based argumentative essay that articulates a clear, thoughtful position, deploys supportive evidence, and considers multiple points of view.
- Observe details that make other people, objects, or places unique within specific cultural or social groups.
- Analyze and evaluate specific concepts or texts that have significance within larger cultural conversations.

Core Requirements

Catalog Description: 3 hours. Writing as inquiry. Develops habits of critical thinking, research-based inquiry, and argument through written engagement with relevant social and cultural issues.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1310, ENGL 1311, or equivalent.

Core Category: Communication (English Composition and Rhetoric)

As ENGL 1320 meets one of your CORE Communication requirements. This course has four CORE skill objectives:

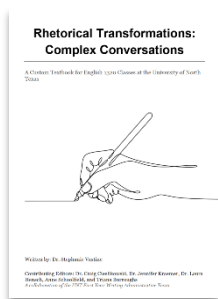
Critical Thinking | The written activity explains insights that the writer has gained through careful consideration of the research and reading done in the course. The writer coherently represents the complexity and nuance of the ideas they are writing about.

Clarity of Communication | The written activity shows that the writer understands the course material and has read widely enough to help audiences understand the significance of the idea they are writing about. The background context and the question the writer is addressing are both coherent and thorough enough.

Organization and Structure | The written activity is clearly organized with a structure that allows audiences to understand its main point as well as the supporting examples and sources that contribute to the main point.

Consideration of Other Perspectives | The written activity demonstrates careful listening to course ideas, course texts, and consideration of other perspectives related to the topic the writer is addressing. The writer considers the cultural and social implications of their topic and argument.

Books & Materials



Rhetorical Transformations: Complex Conversations—custom textbook provided as an OER and/or in hard copy.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by A. Conan Doyle

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg, 2015, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/48320/pg48320-images.html>. Originally published by Harper & Brothers, 1892.

See Canvas for more details on accessing your custom course text and all other readings.

Technical Requirements & Skills

You'll need a [computer](#) with a web camera, microphone, and [internet access](#); and know the basic skills necessary to:

- Use [Outlook for UNT email](#)
- Use [UNT Teams Account](#)
- Use [Canvas](#)
- Use [Microsoft Word and PowerPoint](#)

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Reading Quizzes, Activities, and Virtual Class Discussions	20%	Varies
Research Proposal (MA1) 300-word proposal including a research question, an explanation of the topic, your interest, and the contribution you hope to make to the conversation.	10%	Friday, September 4 th at 5 pm
Annotated Bibliography (MA2) You will write a 300-word abstract and 300-word annotations for eight relevant sources with MLA citations.	20%	Friday, October 2 nd at 5 pm
Rough Draft of Research Paper (MA3) A complete draft of the 5–7-page thesis-driven argumentative research paper	20%	Friday, October 30 th at 5 pm
Final Draft of Research Paper (MA 4) A 5–7-page thesis-driven argumentative research paper	20%	Friday, November 20 th at 5 pm
Final Presentation of Research (MA 5) A 3Minutes to Share style video presentation on your research.	10%	Friday, December 7 th at 5 pm

Grading

A	90-100	“A” WORK will constitute a final score of 90-100% of total points and will represent an overall response that is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly situated in time and context.
B	80-89	“B” WORK will constitute a final score of 80-89% of total points and will represent an overall response that is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, and perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original.
C	70-79	“C” WORK will constitute a final score of 70-79% of total points and will represent an overall response that is acceptable but limited: coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places but ultimately challenged in organization, articulation, perception, and/or effectiveness.
D	60-69	“D” WORK will constitute a final score of 60-69% of total points and will represent an overall response that is incomplete and may be severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, and overall not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates.
F	0-59	“F” WORK will constitute a final score of 0-59% of total points and will represent an unacceptable overall response. Such work does not meet the assignment’s requirements. The number of errors impedes the work’s meaning. Shows no understanding of the concepts being taught.

All major assignments must be turned in on Canvas and processed through Turnitin to be eligible to pass this course.

I encourage you to monitor your score and review feedback posted on Canvas; However, Canvas’s gradebook is not always accurate. Some grades are not incorporated until *after* the last class day. If you are concerned about your grades, please book a time to meet with me so we can discuss them.

Attendance and Participation

As this is an Asynchronous online course, you will work each week independently, and attendance and participation are considered part of your weekly assignment completion.

Late Work

This course requires extensive reading and regular writing. To keep up with the course, you must complete all assignments by the date and time stated on Canvas. I do not accept late submissions of minor assignments (Reading Quizzes, Activities, and Virtual Class Discussions). Late Major assignments will be marked down with one full letter grade (from a B to a C) for every 24 hours that they are late.

You cannot pass the course if all major assignments are not submitted.

Work and Communication Expectations

Feedback

I strive to return all graded work promptly. For shorter assignments and discussions, I will generally post grades/feedback within seven days of the due date. For larger projects, I aim for fourteen days, but with the rise in cheating and plagiarism, it occasionally takes longer to grade a set of papers. If it has been longer than the times mentioned, please feel free to ask me when to expect the grades and feedback, but not before then.

Student Hours

Feel free to use my office hours as often as you'd like to chat with me, review an assignment, or discuss any questions or concerns. In my experience, a quick conversation is the most effective way to resolve any confusion.

As this is an asynchronous online class, my student hours are only held as virtual meetings. You will need to make an appointment on my booking page to ensure you have time to meet with me. If those times do not work for you, you'll need to email me so we can find another time to meet.

Email

It is your responsibility to check your UNT email during your 'business' hours each day to ensure you do not miss any time-sensitive information.

I will respond to all correspondence to my UNT email (amberwalters-molina@my.unt.edu) within three business days. All other communication methods—Canvas Messenger, assignment comments, personal emails, physical letters, etc.—*are unreliable* ways to contact me. I cannot guarantee that I will see your message on other platforms within any specific time frame, if ever.

Please check the syllabus, Canvas, and related assignment sheets before emailing me, and in your email, indicate where you looked for the information you are seeking before you emailed me. So that if something is unclear, I can fix it. When you write to me, please include the subject of your email in the subject line and write your email with appropriate salutations and grammar. For a sample email, read this article, "[How to Email Your Professor](#)." Or, for a checklist on effective email communication between yourself and instructors, see <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

Public Writing

All submissions for this course, including but not limited to pre-writing, drafts, in-class assignments, and final projects, are public, i.e., any writing submitted for this course may be viewed by your

classmates. All writing will be submitted through Canvas and Turnitin. Do not submit any information that you are unwilling to share.

Syllabus Change Notice

I have made every attempt to provide an accurate syllabus for this course. However, if unanticipated circumstances arise that necessitate an amendment to the syllabus, I will provide advance written notice via email of all changes and will provide an updated hard copy with the changes.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Standards

According to [UNT Policy 06.003](#), Academic Integrity standards are violated when students engage in academic dishonesty behaviors, including, but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty and the instructor's decision on academic sanctions will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism can include copying a passage from a source verbatim without citing it, but it can also include improper or misleading citations. Please note that all source material must be acknowledged, even if the material is paraphrased. Be careful always to acknowledge the work of other writers and take the time to work out your thoughts and arguments without copying the work of others.

The use of generative AI writing tools is prohibited in this class. Assignments for the course have been designed to help you develop as a thinker, reader, and writer without using these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write independently, or, when appropriate, in consultation with peers, UNT Writing Center tutors, and me. *Any* use of generative AI in your work violates our syllabus and UNT's academic integrity policy and thus will be treated as an instance of cheating.

Ignorance of the generative AI tools in your chosen digital writing technologies, whatever they may be, is not sufficient to excuse the violation. If you are unsure about a digital writing tool (even automatically integrated ones), don't use it for this class.

Acceptable Student Behavior

According to [UNT policy 07.012](#), student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be notified verbally or in writing and may be directed to leave the classroom. Additionally, the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.

For additional information, refer to the [Dean of Students](#) website.

ADA Accommodations

According to [UNT policy 16.001](#), UNT will make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA). Then, the ODA will provide them with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty members detailing the students' accommodation needs. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours. Students may request reasonable accommodation at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in

implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation and meet with all faculty members prior to accommodation implementation every semester.

For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#) website.

Academic Freedom & Responsibility

UNT has a robust policy regarding academic freedom and academic responsibility. Crucially, this policy encompasses not only the rights of faculty members but also the rights “of the student to freedom in learning.” As a student in this classroom, therefore, you have the right to encounter and debate new ideas, diverse forms of knowledge, and unfamiliar or contrary points of view. According to UNT policy, “it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.” At the same time, to encourage the free exchange of ideas, and to ensure that your right to learn is protected, the tone for such discussion must always be civil and respectful; hateful or discriminatory speech will not be tolerated. For more information, please consult the full UNT policy at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-035>[Links to an external site.](#)

Audio/Video Recording

Although UNT is a publicly supported institution, our classroom is not a public space. Therefore, to protect the intellectual property and privacy rights of both faculty and students, video and audio recordings are prohibited during class. The exception is for students who have been granted explicit approval as an ODA accommodation. For more information, please consult the full UNT policy at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access/faculty/faculty-guide/accommodations-explained/Audio-Recording-Faculty.html>[Links to an external site.](#)

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly provide students with critical information in the event of an emergency. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

For additional information, refer to the [Eagle Alert](#) website.

Getting Help

Technical Assistance:

[Information Technology Help Desk | University of North Texas](#)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Writing Assistance:

[Writing Center | University of North Texas](#)

Email: WritingCenter@unt.edu

Phone: 940.565.2563

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 150

1320 Fall 2026 Schedule

Week	Readings	Assignments
1	- Syllabus <i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 1: Rhetorical Thinking for the Research Process” “Adventure I: A Scandal in Bohemia”	
2	<i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 2: Research and Inquiry” “Adventure II: The Red-Headed League”	
3	“Adventure III: A Case of Identity”	MA1
4	<i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 3: Gathering and Evaluating Sources” “Adventure IV: The Boscombe Valley Mystery”	
5	“Adventure V: The Five Orange Pips”	
6	“Adventure VI: The Man with the Twisted Lip”	
7	“Adventure VII: The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle”	MA2
8	<i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 4: Building Arguments” “Adventure VIII: The Adventure of the Speckled Band”	
9	“Adventure IX: The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb”	
10	“Adventure X: The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor”	
11	“Adventure XI: The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet”	MA3
12	<i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 5: Revision, Remixing, and Collaboration”	
13	“Adventure XII: The Adventure of the Copper Beeches”	
14	<i>Rhetorical Transformations</i> “Chapter 6: Presenting Your Ideas”	MA4
15		
16		MA5
Finals		