**FIRST-YEAR WRITING I**

**ENGL 1310.414 (12948)**

**Fall 2025**

**Instructor: Danielle Kotrla Email:** **daniellekotrla@my.unt.edu**

**Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3 PM (and by appointment) Virtual Office:** [**Zoom**](https://unt.zoom.us/j/85824449602)

**Course Modality:** This course is listed as online and asynchronous. There are no required meeting times. All coursework (including quizzes, discussions, weekly writing, and major assignments) will be completed and submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted.

*Writing is very difficult, but so is any job carefully executed. What is a privilege, however, is to do a job to your own satisfaction.*

*—* Gabriel García Márquez

**Course Overview:** The ENGL 1310 course serves as an entry point into the environment of academic inquiry and argument. Instruction in ENGL 1310 begins with an emphasis on cultivating writing through personal discovery, exploration, and reflection. Students learn about writing processes, explore genre conventions, and gain rhetorical knowledge while writing through their experiences and memories. With these more personal contexts as background, students are guided over the course of the semester towards becoming more comfortable with the conventions and habits of academic argument. The goals of ENGL 1310 include developing a working knowledge of writing processes, recognizing and using written genre conventions, and learning rhetoric for the purposes of analyzing and composing effective written texts. Students in ENGL 1310 fulfill these goals while engaging with nonfiction readings emphasizing narrative and description and focusing on issues of cultural significance.

**Required Course Materials:**

* *Steps to Writing Well* by Jean Wyrick, Eleventh Edition.

This course requires you to purchase a digital version of this text. Information on purchasing the textbook and accessing MindTap can be found on Canvas.

**Technical Requirements & Skills:** Because nearly all of the work we will do have online components, you must have the correct tools. These include:

* A computer with word processing capabilities, internet access, and web browser
* Access to Canvas

**Computer Skills & Digital Literacy:** Students in this course should be able to:

* Use Canvas
* Use email with attachments

**AI Policy:** It is true that, at this point in its technological development, AI can complete many tasks, and often complete them well. But it is my belief that it cannot engage in the type of writing we will do for this course, a skill that, at its core, involves human consideration. As Ted Chiang writes in “[Why AI Isn’t Going to Make Art](https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-weekend-essay/why-ai-isnt-going-to-make-art)”:

The task that generative AI has been most successful at is lowering our expectations, both of the things we read and of ourselves when we write anything for others to read. It is a fundamentally dehumanizing technology because it treats us as less than what we are: creators and apprehenders of meaning. It reduces the amount of intention in the world…What you create doesn’t have to be utterly unlike every prior piece of art in human history to be valuable; the fact that you’re the one who is saying it, the fact that it derives from your unique life experience and arrives at a particular moment in the life of whoever is seeing your work, is what makes it new. We are all products of what has come before us, but it’s by living our lives in interaction with others that we bring meaning into the world. That is something that an auto-complete algorithm can never do.

His focus, of course, is slightly different from ours. We won’t be (for the most part) writing novels or creating films, but the writing we will be doing involves a similar type of engagement with meaning. It involves intention, creativity, and the use of the imagination. At the end of the day, I hope that what you take away from this course are new ways to consider your interactions with others, the world you encounter, and how *you* move through it, and that you ultimately find yourself equipped with new writing strategies and skills to name and make sense of your experiences. You will not be able to do these things if you outsource your thinking to a large-language model.

As such, the use of generative AI in any form or fashion is not allowed in this course. It is assumed that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually (unless otherwise noted). Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, etc. These constitute cases of academic dishonesty and, as noted above, will be reported.

**Grading:** Your overall course grade consists of the weighted sum of the following assignments:

* Major Assignments: 50%
	+ The Learning Narrative
	+ The Observation Essay
	+ The Analysis Essay
	+ The Reflective Essay
* Weekly Writing: 20%
* Discussions & Peer Review: 15%
* Quizzes: 10%
* Reflections: 5%

This course is graded according to the requirements specified and weighted below.

A = 90-100% B = 80-89% C = 70-79% D = 60-69% F = 50-59%

**NOTE:** I will not discuss any information relating to academic records via email.

**Rubrics and Scoring System:** For the purposes of this course, we describe the grades you will be assigned in this way:

**A** (90-100%): Exceeds the assignment's requirements, has few to no errors. Shows a mastery of the concepts being taught. Is impressively sophisticated, inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly situated in time and context.

**B** (80-89%): Meets most of the assignment’s requirements. The number of errors does not impede the work’s meaning. Shows high level of understanding of the concepts being taught. Skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original.

**C** (70-79%): Meets most of the assignment’s requirements. The number of errors may impede the work’s meaning. Shows some understanding of the concepts being taught. Coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places but ultimately challenged in organization, articulation, and/or effectiveness.

**D** (60-69%): Does not meet most of the assignment's requirements. The number of errors does impede the work’s meaning. Shows low level of understanding of the concepts being taught. Offers an overall response that is incomplete and may be severely lacking: incoherent, limited, uncritical, immature, underdeveloped, and overall, not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates.

**F** (59% or below): Does not meet the assignment's requirements. The number of errors impede the work's meaning. Shows no understanding of the concepts being taught.

**Participation & Civility:** Given the online, asynchronous nature of this course, active and productive participation in all course assignments and discussions is absolutely crucial, and students are expected to participate in all required activities. Your final grade will be dependent upon your preparedness for and your engaged participation in this class.

We are all members of an academic community where it is our shared responsibility to cultivate a climate where all students/individuals are valued and where both they and their ideas are treated with respect. Therefore, I expect you to conduct yourself in a professional and respectful manner during all online interactions and class-­related activities. I expect you to listen to and respect the viewpoints of others, even if you strongly disagree with them. When you do voice disagreement in your writing, do so in a civil manner. Remember that you are accountable for your actions in this course, including your submitted work, your grades, and your interactions with me and with other students.

Everyone will have numerous opportunities to participate throughout class. Participation can be many things and take different forms, including the following:

* Showing attention to others in discussion posts
* Completing all assignments on time
* Coming prepared to conferences/office hours

**Late or Missed Assignments:** If an illness or otherwise UNT-authorized absence interferes with your ability to turn in an assignment on time, I am happy to offer an adequate extension. **These extensions must be requested at least 24 hours in advance of the assignment’s due date.** I will follow these policies when deciding whether to accept other late work:

* All papers are due by the date specified in Canvas.
* I will deduct 5 points for each day (not business day) your work is late.
* Reach out to me as soon as possible if you miss a deadline for an assignment.

**NOTE:** you cannot receive a passing grade for this course if you do not complete all four major writing assignments.

In the event that you are struggling to complete your work, for any reason, please let me know so that I can help. My goal as your instructor is to provide you with the tools and space that will allow you to grow and succeed beyond the confines of this class. The key is to stay in communication with me.

**Rules of Engagement:** Here are some of the “Rules of Engagement” UNT recommends as guidelines for our class:

* While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, or state law will not be tolerated.
* Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
* Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
* Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
* Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
* Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
* Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
* Proofread and fact-check your sources.
* Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

You also can visit the [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) page for more information.

**Public Writing Policy:** All your submitted writing for this course, including prewriting, drafts, in-class assignments, and final projects, is public writing. The writing that you submit in this course may be viewed by me and possibly your classmates as well. Please do not submit any information about yourself that you do not want to be public.

**Communication Expectations:** As mentioned previously, communication with me is crucial to your success in this course. Here are a few things to remember:

* Communicate with me formally through my UNT email address and include the course and section number in the subject line.
* Use appropriate salutations and grammatical language.
* Treat all emails as professional communication.
* Respect the personal identities and privacy of yourself, of me, and others.
* Respect identities based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.
* Think carefully about what you reveal and do not reveal, particularly if this information involves your health and/or classroom performance. If your emails contain any information that causes me to be concerned for your safety, or the safety of others, I will report it.
* Refrain from making personal attacks or using language that discriminates based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.

**Authorized Absences:** UNT authorizes absences for the following reasons as excusable by the university (policy 06.039):

* Religious holy day, including travel for that purpose
* Active military service, including travel for that purpose
* Participation in an official university function
* Illness or other extenuating circumstances
* Pregnancy and parenting under Title IX
* When the university is officially closed by the President

If you plan to miss class for one of the events above, please see me as soon as possible before the date of your absence so we can arrange for you to submit work.

**Syllabus Change Policy:** I have made every attempt to provide this syllabus as an accurate overview of the course. However, unanticipated circumstances may make it necessary for me to modify the syllabus during the semester. These circumstances may arise in response to the progress, needs, and experiences of students. Advance notice will be given for any changes made to the syllabus.

The following university policies are upheld in all English courses.

**Academic Integrity Standards & Consequences:** According to UNT Policy 06.003, [Student Academic Integrity](https://vpaa.unt.edu/fs/resources/academic/integrity), academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to:

* Cheating: submitting work that is not your own (this includes the use of ChatGPT)
* Fabrication: pretending you are writing about a real interview when you really made it up
* Facilitating academic dishonesty: helping someone else cheat
* Forgery: pretending your work is someone else’s
* Plagiarism: using someone else’s published work without citing it correctly
* Sabotage: setting someone else up to fail

A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. I am obligated to report any instances of academic dishonesty.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** 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 directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct). The University’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

The [Dean of Students Office](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) enforces the [Code of Student Conduct](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012). The Code explains:

* What conduct is prohibited
* The process the DOS uses to review reports of alleged misconduct by students
* The sanctions that can be assigned

When students may have violated the Code, they meet with a representative from the Dean of Students Office to discuss the alleged misconduct in an educational process.

**Sexual Assault Prevention:** UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance.

The Survivor Advocates can be reached at:

* SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu
* Dean of Students Office: (940) 565-2648

Visit [Title IX Student Information](https://edo.unt.edu/title-ix-student-information) for more resources.

**ADA Accommodations:** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. To receive accommodation, follow these steps:

1. Register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility.
2. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs.
3. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation.
4. Students must obtain a new letter of accommodation every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/). You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

**Undocumented Students:** Please see UNT Dallas'[Resources for DACA Students](https://www.untdallas.edu/sa/daca.php) web page for more information.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called [Eagle Alert](https://www.unt.edu/eaglealert) to quickly provide students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.