



COMM 3340: METHODS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM

Fall 2026 | COMM 3340-001 |
MW 9:35-10:55 a.m. | LANG 313

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COMM 3340-001	Course
LANG 313	Room
GAB 328 940-565-2588	Office
MW 9:35- 10:55 a.m.	Meetings
Dr. Matthew Heard	Instructor
MW 1:00- 2:00 p.m. or by appointment	Office Hours

COURSE OVERVIEW

Catalog description. Survey of significant methodologies available to rhetorical critics. Emphasis on the critical abilities necessary to describe, explain, analyze, and evaluate symbolic influence in the public sphere. Prerequisite(s): Communication Studies majors must complete COMM 3010 with a grade of C or better prior to enrolling; minors and other majors must complete COMM 2140.

Course frame. Rhetorical criticism asks how symbolic action creates relations, possibilities, and consequences. It also questions how a critic can make that process visible. Rather than treating criticism as summary or fault-finding, this course treats criticism as a disciplined practice of attention, interpretation, evidence, and judgment. Across public artifacts, a shared novel, and an independent final project, we will repeatedly practice criticism as “sharpening” interpretation through six moves: (1) Notice, (2) Name, (3) Contextualize, (4) Interpret, (5) Support, and (6) Explain the Stakes. COMM 3340 is a face-to-face course meeting twice weekly throughout the Fall 2026 semester.

BIG QUESTIONS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to independently analyze a consequential rhetorical artifact by selecting an appropriate critical lens, identifying meaningful patterns, constructing a supported interpretation, and explaining the broader stakes of that interpretation.

- What makes an interpretation rhetorical rather than merely descriptive?
- How does a critical lens change what a critic can notice and name?
- What does rhetoric enable, constrain, normalize, transform, or make possible?
- Whose knowledge and experience are treated as authoritative?
- How can a critic support an interpretation while acknowledging its limits?
- What makes a critical intervention worth making?

Students will develop the ability to:

- Read and “reverse-engineer” scholarly rhetorical criticism by identifying artifact, question/problem, lens, evidence, interpretive claim, and stakes.
- Apply rhetorical concepts to specific textual, visual, spatial, embodied, and public evidence.

Students will develop the ability to (cont):

- Distinguish description and evaluation from sustained interpretation.
- Use multiple critical lenses comparatively and justify a methodological choice.
- Construct coherent analytical claims supported by specific evidence and contextual reasoning.
- Explain how rhetoric creates identities, relations, spaces, silences, values, possibilities, and material consequences.
- Revise analytical work substantively and explain the reasoning behind revision decisions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND DIGITAL ACCESS



Kiley Reid, **Such a Fun Age**. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2019. Paperback ISBN 9780525541912; e-book ISBN 9780525541929. Students may purchase, rent, borrow, or use an electronic edition, but reading assignments are listed by chapter rather than page number.

All other required readings will be provided through Canvas. This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and access to a word-processing program capable of producing common file formats. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on successful digital learning is available through UNT Learn Anywhere.

HOW YOUR WORK WILL BE ASSESSED

Category	Points	Percent
Learning Practice	300	30%
Anatomy of a Rhetorical Criticism	100	10%
Such a Fun Age Analysis Suite	200	20%
Final Critical Intervention Checkpoints	150	15%
Final Critical Intervention	200	20%
Revision Memo	50	5%
TOTAL	1,000	100%

Extra credit: up to 50 points (5% of the course grade) may be earned through selected intellectual extensions, public events, or other opportunities announced during the semester. Extra credit cannot replace missing major assignments or required final-project checkpoints.

Learning Practice: 300 Points

Learning Practice is the recurring work through which we learn how to do criticism: reading checks, short quizzes, analytical exercises, workshops, peer response, passage work, and other in-class practice. Approximately 330 Learning Practice points will be available; the category is capped at 300 points. The 30-point cushion provides flexibility for occasional absences, low scores, or other circumstances. Learning Practice exercises ordinarily cannot be made up.

- 5 points: quick checks, exit responses, brief annotations, passage selection, or small analytical moves.
- 10 points: normal analytical practice, article maps, lens applications, peer feedback, or short quizzes.
- 15 points: substantial quizzes, synthesis exercises, extended analyses, or major workshops.

Analytical Learning Practice uses this scale: 100% = Exceeds Expectations; 90% = Above Expectations; 70% = Meets Expectations; 50% = Below Expectations; 30% = Submitted but Far Below Expectations; 0 = absent, unfinished, or does not meet expectations. Objective quizzes are scored directly by points earned.

Anatomy of a Rhetorical Criticism: 100 Points

Students reverse-engineer a published rhetorical criticism by identifying its artifact/archive, problem or question, conceptual lens, recurring evidence, interpretive claim, and stakes. Preparatory evidence charts and workshops count as Learning Practice; the finished Anatomy assignment is worth 100 points.

Such a Fun Age Analysis Suite: 200 Points

Our class novel this semester, *Such a Fun Age*, serves as the first artifact students will use to practice original rhetorical criticism before selecting an independent public artifact. Students will analyze a focused scene, relationship, setting, or recurring pattern through one course lens.



- Scene/pattern pitch - 10 points
- Two-lens exploratory test - 10 points
- Formal proposal - 30 points
- Evidence map + working claim - 25 points
- Full draft/readiness - 25 points
- Final analysis - 100 points

Final Critical Intervention: 400 Points Total

The final project and culminating performance in this course asks students to analyze a delimited nonliterary public artifact connected to a consequential public or "wicked" problem. Students may submit an academic essay, podcast, or video essay, provided each format demonstrates equivalent rhetorical analysis and includes a transcript, script, storyboard, citations, or other documentation sufficient to assess the analysis rather than production polish.

- Artifact + wicked-problem pitch - 10
- Two-lens test - 10
- Formal proposal - 30
- Evidence map + working claim - 20
- Complete analytical section - 30
- Full draft - 30
- Revision workshop + plan - 10
- Showcase briefing - 10
- Revised Final Critical Intervention - 200
- Revision Memo - 50

The 50-point **Revision Memo** is a substantive part of the final performance. It should identify important feedback and revision priorities, explain which changes the student made or chose not to make, show how evidence/claims/lens use changed, and explain why those decisions strengthened the final intervention.

GRADING SCALE AND QUALITY STANDARDS

A = 900-1000 | B = 800-899 | C = 700-799 | D = 600-699 | F = 0-599. Extra-credit points are added after the 1,000-point base grade is calculated, up to the 50-point course cap.

- A work is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: perceptive, careful, well-supported, intellectually responsible, and effective.
- B work is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, and perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original.
- C work is acceptable but limited: coherent and significant, perhaps insightful in places, but insufficiently developed in organization, articulation, perception, evidence, or effectiveness.
- D work is incomplete and severely lacking: limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, or otherwise below the performance expected of UNT undergraduates.
- F work is unacceptable, missing, or does not demonstrate the required course performance.

ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION, AND LEARNING PRACTICE

Attendance and preparation matter in this course because rhetorical criticism is learned through repeated practice. Learning Practice exercises provide evidence of attendance and engagement. Students earn points by completing in-class analytical work, quizzes, workshops, and other activities. Approximately 330 points are available but only 300 will count towards the grade. The **built-in 30-point cushion** is intended to absorb ordinary absences and occasional low scores. Note that routine make-up work is not offered. University-authorized absences and approved accommodations will be handled in accordance with UNT Policy 06.039, Student Attendance and Authorized Absences, and applicable accommodation requirements. If you arrive late, you are welcome to join class without disrupting others, but work already completed or collected ordinarily cannot be recreated.

LATE WORK AND READINESS DEADLINES

All work is due by the beginning of class on the date indicated unless otherwise stated. Learning Practice ordinarily cannot be made up. Formal readiness/checkpoint work submitted after the class activity it was designed to prepare for may earn **no more than 70%** unless an approved circumstance applies. Major assignments submitted late are penalized 10% per calendar day for up to three days; after three days, major work is not accepted without an approved exception. Contact me before a deadline whenever possible if serious circumstances interfere with your work.

GENERATIVE AI: LIMITED AND TRANSPARENT USE

Generative AI tools can support learning, but they cannot substitute for the reading, noticing, evidence selection, interpretation, and writing that this course is designed to develop. Unless a specific assignment explicitly authorizes otherwise, you may not use GenAI to generate, rewrite, or supply analytical claims, paragraphs, close readings, evidence selections, or other content that you submit as your own work. You may use GenAI for limited study and process support - for example, generating practice questions, clarifying a term after you have completed the assigned reading, brainstorming search terms, troubleshooting technology, or identifying surface-level proofreading issues in prose you have already written. If GenAI materially contributes to submitted work in an authorized way, disclose the tool and describe how you used it. When in doubt, ask before using it. Unauthorized substitution of AI-generated work for your own learning or authorship may constitute academic dishonesty under UNT Policy 06.003.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Every student can improve by doing their own work and using appropriate resources honestly. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty includes behaviors such as cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. Source material must be acknowledged whether quoted or paraphrased. Findings of academic dishonesty may result in academic penalties and are reported through the university academic-integrity process. If you are uncertain about citation, collaboration, or AI use, ask before submitting.

COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Connect with me through UNT email (matthew.heard@unt.edu) or office hours. I aim to respond to student email promptly during business days; if you do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow-up. Office hours are a good place to clarify course concepts, talk through an analytical problem, or get support with an assignment. Additional meetings are available by appointment.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

This course examines questions about which people may disagree substantially. Academic inquiry does not require students to share political commitments, experiences, identities, or conclusions. You will be evaluated on the quality of your reasoning, evidence, interpretation, participation, and academic work—not on whether you adopt a particular viewpoint.

Disagreement, questioning, criticism, uncertainty, and revision are appropriate parts of academic inquiry. Personal attacks, harassment, or conduct that prevents others from participating are not. Our goal is a classroom in which students can examine difficult questions seriously, test interpretations, challenge ideas with evidence, and revise judgments when warranted.

ADA ACCOMMODATION

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it is important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. You must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and resources, refer to the UNT Office of Disability Access.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION, CAMPUS CLOSURES, AND COURSE CHANGES

Students will be notified through Eagle Alert when a campus closing affects university operations or class meetings. In an emergency, follow instructions provided through Eagle Alert and by university or emergency personnel

RECORDING CLASS

This course depends on open and robust discussion. Recording of class meetings - including audio, video, live-streaming, or photographs of course materials - is not permitted unless authorized by the instructor or required by an approved Office of Disability Access accommodation. When an approved accommodation requires recording, implementation will follow university procedures and protect the privacy of class participants.

ACADEMIC COURSE CONTENT

THIS COURSE EXAMINES RHETORIC, ARGUMENT, CRITICISM, IDENTITY, POWER, DIFFERENCE, PUBLIC DISCOURSE, AND SOCIAL JUDGMENT AS SUBJECTS OF ACADEMIC STUDY. STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE COURSE MATERIAL AND ONE ANOTHER THROUGH ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE, INTERPRETATION, CRITICAL INQUIRY, AND RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION. NO STUDENT IS REQUIRED TO AFFIRM A PARTICULAR POLITICAL OR IDEOLOGICAL POSITION.

CONCEALED HANDGUN CARRY

Texas law and UNT policy govern concealed handgun carry on campus. A license holder may carry a concealed handgun where permitted, but may not intentionally or knowingly display a handgun in plain view or carry in locations or at activities prohibited by law or UNT policy. Consult current UNT campus-carry information for applicable restrictions.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

UNT provides academic, health, financial, legal, career, and basic-needs support. Students whose circumstances may affect academic performance are encouraged to use appropriate university resources. Useful starting points include unt.edu/success, unt.edu/wellness, Scrappy Says, the UNT Writing Center, UNT Libraries, the Learning Center/Academic Success resources, Student Health and Wellness, Counseling services, the CARE Team, the UNT Food Pantry, Financial Aid, Student Legal Services, and the Career Center. Our Communication Studies library resources may also support course research.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Complete all readings before class on the date listed. All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date indicated unless otherwise stated. Schedule is subject to reasonable change; always check Canvas for current readings and instructions.

Date	Day	Topic	Reading	Assignments / Learning Practice	Points
Aug 17	M	Course opening: What rhetorical criticism does	No reading	Opening diagnostic; Notice -> Name -> Contextualize -> Interpret -> Support -> Stakes	LP 10
Aug 19	W	Model criticism I: seeing analytical moves	LeMesurier, "Winking at Excess" (selected article)	Reading Quiz 1 + article map	LP 10
Aug 24	M	From details to patterns	Such a Fun Age, chs. 1-5	SAFA in-class reading/write check	LP 10
Aug 26	W	Model criticism II: artifact, method, evidence, claim	Ives, "Troubled Divisions of Labor"	Reading Quiz 2 + comparison	LP 10
Aug 31	M	Building an anatomy of criticism	Such a Fun Age, chs. 6-12	Anatomy evidence/structure exercise	LP 10
Sep 2	W	Anatomy workshop	No new reading	Draft workshop / readiness	LP 15
Sep 7	M	LABOR DAY - NO CLASS			
Sep 9	W	Argument & context: ethos, logos, pathos	Heinrichs, Thank You for Arguing, pp. 38-45; Such a Fun Age, chs. 13-20	Anatomy FINAL due; Reading Quiz 3 + appeals application	Anatomy 100; LP 10
Sep 14	M	Appeals in actual criticism	Lueck, selected pp. 114-121	Appeals/material-rhetoric analysis	LP 10
Sep 16	W	Enthymeme & commonplaces	"Know Your Enthymeme" + Heinrichs, pp. 114-117; Such a Fun Age, chs. 21-28	Enthymeme/commonplace reconstruction	LP 10
Sep 21	M	Nommo & world-making rhetoric	Karenga, selected pp. 3-6, 13-20	Reading Quiz 4 + SAFA whole-novel pattern inventory	LP 15
Sep 23	W	Kairos & contingency	Hawhee & Crowley, selected pp. 38-44	Kairos application	LP 10
Sep 28	M	Identification & division	"Using Kenneth Burke's Concept of Identification"	Identification analysis; SAFA scene/pattern pitch due	LP 15; SAFA 10
Sep 30	W	Situated criticism: who gets to know?	Davis, pp. 77-80, 84-85	Standpoint application; SAFA two-lens test due	LP 10; SAFA 10
Oct 5	M	Difference, space & self-definition	Mejia & Martinez, selected pp. 310-311, 317-320; Flores, pp. 142-143, 145-148, 151-152	Difference/space/bridge analysis; SAFA proposal due	LP 15; SAFA 30

Oct 7	W	Invitational rhetoric	Foss & Griffin, pp. 3-8, 10-12	Reading Quiz 5 + invitation heuristic; SAFA evidence map + working claim due	LP 10; SAFA 25
Oct 12	M	Applied relational criticism	Forst, selected pp. 5-15	Forst analysis + SAFA full-draft workshop	LP 15; SAFA 25
Oct 14	W	Power as a relation	Foucault, "The Subject and Power," pp. 780-781, 785-792	Power-relations heuristic	LP 10
Oct 19	M	Biopower & normalization	Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," pp. 135-140, 144-145	Biopower application; SAFA FINAL due	LP 10; SAFA 100
Oct 21	W	Affect and rhetorical orientation	Ahmed, "Emotion and Rhetoric," pp. 225-229	Affect analysis	LP 10
Oct 26	M	Capacity, mobility & debility	Puar, "Spatial Debilities," pp. 395-397, 401-406	Capacity/debility analysis	LP 15
Oct 28	W	Power synthesis	No new reading	Foucault -> Ahmed -> Puar synthesis	LP 15
Nov 2	M	Transfer to an independent public artifact	No new reading	Final artifact + wicked-problem pitch due; narrowing activity	Final CP 10; LP 5
Nov 4	W	Choosing a lens	No new reading	Final two-lens test due; lens comparison	Final CP 10; LP 10
Nov 9	M	From question to proposal	No new reading	Final formal proposal due; peer scope check	Final CP 30; LP 5
Nov 11	W	Evidence -> inference -> claim	No new reading	Final evidence map + working claim due	Final CP 20; LP 15
Nov 16	M	Writing analytical sections	No new reading	Complete analytical section due; workshop	Final CP 30; LP 10
Nov 18	W	Full-draft workshop	No new reading	Full draft due	Final CP 30; LP 15
Nov 23	M	THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS			
Nov 25	W	THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS			
Nov 30	M	Revision as analytical work	No new reading	Revision workshop + revision plan	Final CP 10; LP 15
Dec 2	W	Critical Intervention showcase	No new reading	3-4 minute project briefing + response to peers	Final CP 10; LP 10
Dec 7	M	FINAL EXAM PERIOD, 8:00-10:00 a.m., LANG 313	No new reading	Revised Critical Intervention + Revision Memo due by 8:00 a.m.; attendance required	Final 200; Memo 50