



I Saved the Humanities. What Did You Ever Do?

ENGL 3110.001

Writing and Rhetoric in the Humanities

T/Th 9:35-10:55 / LANG 219

UNT Course Catalog: Intermediate-level study in literacies, rhetorics and writing processes. Practice-centered approach to writing, focusing on drafting, revision, and research-based persuasion.

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Office Hours by Appointment: Lang 407b ☎ T/Th 8:00-9:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION: THE BONFIRE OF THE HUMANITIES

To every argument, an equal argument is opposed.
— Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (c. 200)

Since a wise man can be mistaken, and a hundred men, and many nations, what assurance have we that in this century we are not making a mistake?
— Michel de Montaigne, “Apology for Raymond Sebond” (1580)

If I could believe that going to a barricade would affect man’s fate in the slightest I would go to that barricade, and quite often I wish that I could, but it would be less than honest to say that I expect to happen upon such a happy ending.
— Joan Didion, “On the Morning After the Sixties” (1970)

This is a writing class. Its topic is the humanities. Our aim is to analyze, diagnose, propose — and, in the absurd spirit of Max Fischer saving Latin in Wes Anderson’s *Rushmore* — to consider what it might take to save the humanities, if it is worth saving.

The symptoms in numbers: in 2012, 13.1% of all bachelor’s degrees in the U.S. were in the humanities. Already a minority concern, by 2024 that fell to 8.4%. English dropped 43%. History 41%. Classics 43%. Foreign languages dropped 48%. Engineering rose. Health sciences gained. Natural sciences increased. Them’s the facts, and we’re living them. Humanities face major funding cuts, but numbers are only part of the story. Humanities departments and

programs are shrinking nationally. UNT's mission, including for the humanities, is being redirected to focus more on work-related skills than "traditional" university education.



"I saved Latin. What did *you* ever do?"

In April 2026, a committee of scholars released the "Report on the State of Scholarship in the Humanities and the Humanistic Social Sciences," and, in July 2026, a sub-report, "Literary Studies." Falling humanities enrollment was not the focus. The reports respond to a more kairotic question: **has politics distorted scholarship?** These reports are currently being hotly debated, and they figure into our thinking about our rhetoric and writing in the humanities course.



The Greeks had two words for time. *Chronos* is clock time — one battle after another. *Kairos* is the crucial moment inside *chronos*, the urgent one, the window that won't stay open for long. When it closes, one's chance is gone. In Latin, we say, *carpe diem*.

A general on the field of battle must be kairotic. If not, battles and lives are lost. So, *kairos* is a strategic element. Rhetoricians use *kairos* to refer to the timeliness of an argument — not is a claim is true, but is this is the best moment to deploy it? The strategic case for fully supporting the humanities sounds different in a decade of stable budgets and progressive politics than in an era of MAGA politics when UNT faces a \$45 million deficit. Now, the question is about the

value of some things in comparison to other things. This is where we find ourselves. The Boghossian report came out five months before this class. President Keller's restructuring email went out five months before that. Eighty-five programs and certificates are gone. The public record speaks in the language this course will teach you to notice. This is the kairotic moment to make a new kind of case for the humanities' survival or demise.

Though the committee's full report found serious scholarship in every discipline it studied, it considered these kinds of issues as most pertinent in how "the public" perceives the humanities:

- 1) Misuse or willful misconstrual of science by humanists who treat partisan political stances as "settled science." Critics complain that certain empirical or conceptual questions are treated as given prior to sufficient scholarly debate on topics such as
 - a. Biological vs. social explanations of sex differences
 - b. Gender identity and the definition of "woman"
 - c. Systemic racism and social determinants of crime and other social behaviors
- 2) Relativist, social constructivist, postmodern historical and philosophical narratives that claim all truth is subjective and that objective truth, scientific evidence, and rational knowledge are always social or political constructions rooted in social position, identity, or power relations
- 3) An author's perceived racism, colonialism, sexism, or other objectionable views must determine how their work should be evaluated and the tendency to treat identity categories (racial, gender, sexuality) as legitimizing who may or may not speak on a topic
- 4) The claim that pre-decided political convictions and selective evidence of anti-capitalist activists, the use of moralistic ideological critiques of the past, and ideological commitments to social justice (anti-racism, decolonization, feminism, activism, or social transformation) have distorted scholarship about topics such as literature, music, art, history, philosophy, the classics, anthropology, sociology, and religious studies

The report argues that when scholars reject, or lose faith in, the idea of certainty, of objective truth, or empirical evidence, political and moral commitments rush in to fill that vacuum. Thus, critics say, research begins with political conclusions, not intellectual questions. Scholarship becomes a vehicle for advancing social causes. Scholars' questions shift from "What is true?" to "What political outcome should my field advance?" To have been a humanities student is to recognize that these criticisms are based in fact, whether or not we agree with the criticism.

The committee's report contends that this shift has damaged intellectual credibility, weakened scholarly standards, and led to the public's mistrust in the humanities. The report isn't, however, a case for the political right, nor does it soft pedal that left-oriented scholarship is, in fact, built around explicit social-justice issues. The report shows how political advocacy from both sides trumps scholarly inquiry. Its remedy for left-coded ideological distortion is not right-coded ideological distortion. It argues for a humanities grounded in rigor, evidence, and a claim's relationship to facts and/or the truth, not its relationship to anyone's politics.

Appiah's sub-report, "Literary Studies," also emphasizes that though much literary scholarship is rigorous and valuable, several trends threaten the intellectual integrity and public credibility of literary studies. Appiah's report evaluates the politicization of literary scholarship as

overemphasizing political or activist goals, which leads to political commitments steering research more than hard evidence. Then, competing explanations and inconvenient evidence are dismissed. Appiah concurs that the rejection of objective truth and acceptance of postmodern relativism puts “truth” in quotation marks as only ever an expression of power. Appiah’s report then notices implications of these for literary studies:

1. Identity-based epistemology determines who may speak about a topic —Black literature requires Black scholars, or transgender topics, transgender scholars. Lived experience is treated as a monopoly without considering that outsiders can understand and contribute.
2. Refusal to engage with dissent results in cancelation of individuals or treating critics as evil — racist, transphobic — and, thus, avoids engaging other arguments. Appiah stresses the need for Socratic fallibilism: scholars should accept they may be wrong and welcome criticism.
3. The “Sociological Turn” has turned literary studies toward social-science topics: race, ethnicity, gender, power, social justice, postcolonialism, law, economics. Hiring, publication, and prize trends confirm it. These legitimate topics crowd out distinctively literary questions — form, genre, style, aesthetic value, interpretation, literary history — so the discipline risks forgetting its own subject matter.
4. Gesture politics claim that literary studies ought to advance equity, justice, and climate action primarily. No actual evidence shows literary scholarship can do that.
5. Activist teachers do not help students think critically and understand literature but attempt to mobilize them politically. Analyzing injustice becomes attempts to mobilize students to fight it, armed with activist critiques of literary texts.

Appiah argues for the value of identity-focused scholarship: postcolonial, race, gender, and social justice scholars produce important work, and many meet proper standards. This becomes problematic when literary inquiry is subordinated to political goals that discourage dissent and reject objective standards of evidence and argument.

So, the questions facing the humanities and literary studies at this point of our zeitgeist are:

1. Should scholarship that begins from ideological commitments be treated differently from scholarship that doesn’t — and can the humanities meaningfully police that distinction in practice?
2. Can the discipline defend objective truth and evidence against the pressures of postmodern relativism, or has that fight already been conceded by default?
3. Are identity-based restrictions on inquiry constraining what can be studied and said — and if so, where, by whom, and how would a report tell the difference between a restriction and a norm?
4. Is cancellation and the refusal to engage dissenting views a real and growing problem in the humanities, or a smaller phenomenon inflated by the attention it draws?
5. Are social justice goals reshaping research and pedagogical agendas — and if they are, is that reshaping a corruption of the discipline’s purpose or a legitimate evolution of it?
6. Should scholarly activism be treated as a legitimate purpose of humanities disciplines, or does treating it as the primary purpose come at the expense of the discipline’s other obligations?

7. Can disciplinary rigor and truth-seeking still be defended as prior to political advocacy — and who gets to decide where that line falls?

None of this splits cleanly along left/right lines. Critics fault the reports for generalizing from a few controversial examples, targeting weak scholarship rather than the field's best work, using "relativism" too loosely, and handing administrators ammunition to override disciplinary judgment — while understating what feminist, postcolonial, Black, and queer scholarship have accomplished. Support from the right will likely do the most damage to funding, but left-adjacent scholars share the reports' core worry — conclusions fixed before inquiry damage any field — without rejecting the study of race, gender, or power. Nearly everyone agrees evidence should precede conclusions. The real fight: whether the humanities offer anything besides politics.

And that's where we take the stage. We hear how the "public" finds little value in intellectual pursuits. (That complaint goes back to ancient Greece and Aristophanes' *The Clouds*.) We're here to investigate whether the humanities are a worthy project worth saving, if they're essential to what it means to be a human being (or if that's just another "we" say), and if there are options to defining the goal of college as training useful servants to be cogs in the machine.



This report and these debates are the background of this course. The effects are felt in universities across Texas and at UNT, where all course syllabi undergo review for compliance with state law on "race ideology" or "gender ideology." Some courses have been cancelled and some faculty reprimanded. Courses approved by departments, colleges, or deans have also been cancelled, in some cases for only "a high preponderance of noncompliant material."

Our aim is neither to write impassioned manifestos nor to mourn the way things used to be. We aren't weeping for the humanities as if they were an endangered bird. We're not here to justify the humanities because they teach "transferable skills." That Socrates prepares you for a marketing job. That poetry provides creativity which big business needs. And so on.

We're taking a different tack. Observe and report. We'll learn some skills and methods from three exemplars of this approach: Joan Didion, Janet Malcolm, and Lauren Oyler.

Didion, in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* and *The White Album*, assesses radical upheavals in the social scene of the 60s and 70s. Her method is: report what people say about themselves and let their own words sentence them. Her subject is how an era's identity becomes performance — how a cause starts in conviction ends as costume. Janet Malcolm's method in *Nobody's Looking at You* is Socratic: ask a question, get the subject talking at length, then step back to let the subject's own language critique their position. Uninterrupted, her subjects speak about what they believe matters until their justifications collapse. Malcolm doesn't state the contradiction. She stages the quotation. Oyler's *No Judgment* is built around that phrase everybody uses and almost nobody means. She finds the same tell everywhere — a culture that insists it isn't judging while judging constantly, covertly, through ratings and vibes, and hedges instead of arguments. Her case is that an actual argued opinion is more honest than a performance of being tolerant or nonjudgmental because an argument can be checked.

These writers illustrate approaches we can use that neither pile onto the humanities-in-crisis nor pathetically grieve for them. The greatest danger may not be the facts. It may be the humanities' own self-defense, its own advertising, its own pity-party. Politicians will cut whatever they want, no matter how convincing arguments are. But, for now, there's still some faith in democracy, some belief that the humanities nourish the soul, and there's still a "public" to hear a well-made case. If the humanities is going to be saved, someone needs to save it from itself.

This course does not defend the humanities with emotion or nostalgia. It pays attention. Watch a classroom before deciding if the classroom matters. Watch a school before deciding it's outmoded. Listen to people defend the humanities out loud, at a real event, and notice what they do not or will not say. Report it straight. Evidence before conclusions.

These are the rhetorical and actual historical stakes of this course. Not "is the left too woke?" or "is the right destroying the university?" The questions are: can the humanities point us to something "true"? Can the people defending them do more than restate articles of faith? You'll report on areas on which your futures as humanities students may depend. You make your case for your take on the humanities, its customs and costumes, its inherited sense of what counts as acceptable or forbidden, real or posed, worth saving or not. The audience for the last report is not the teacher or the classroom. Revised for a public audience, it becomes an article — submittable to the *North Texas Daily* or another outlet — a piece of writing meant to be read by people whose minds you might change. The semester's final exam period is not a test. It is a presentation of that work, to the class and, if we can arrange it, to others from the humanities or from LEAPH — the people this whole argument has been about.



Joan Didion: “A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.”

WHAT TO EXPECT: A NOTE ON COURSE TEXTS

It’s impossible to offend someone who isn’t interested in being offended.
— Friedrich Schlegel (1798)

The writers on this syllabus share a sensibility: they report what they see, rather than what a culture thinks they ought to see. They often reach conclusions that cut against the consensus of whatever happens to be fashionable — perhaps of the political right, perhaps of the left. They let uncomfortable observations stand, without softening them, moralizing, or telling you how to feel about it. None of our authors built a career on offering palatable conclusions.

As we take them as models, our task is to ask if their noticing is accurate, if their reporting holds up, and what the discomfort reveals — about the subject, about the writer, about us. A close, disinterested account of a scene, an institution, or a person will sometimes produce a finding nobody wanted. That is not a problem with the method but an expression of its style.

This Instructor’s Responsibilities: I aim to follow Stanley Fish’s advice in *Save the World on Your Own Time*. The job of someone teaching in a university is to

- 1) introduce students to bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry they didn’t know much about before, and 2) equip students with the analytical skills to move confidently within those traditions and pursue independent work should they choose to. Teachers should show up for class, prepare lesson plans, teach what’s been advertised, stay current

in the field, correct assignments promptly, hold office hours, and give academic — not political or moral — advice. That’s it. There’s nothing else, and nothing more.

Should a reading or a discussion land on a topic someone finds unwelcome, we’ll handle it in academic terms: as a claim to be tested against evidence, not a position to applaud or punish. A classroom should be the site of what Fish calls “intellectual virtues,” not of virtue signaling. As he puts it: “opinion-sharing sessions are like junk food — they fill you up with starch and leave you sated and hungry at once. A sustained inquiry into the truth of a matter is an almost athletic experience. It may exhaust you, but it also improves you.”

What Being in This Class and Staying Enrolled Means: Our three authors write between the 60s and the present. They often needle whichever side of an argument feels most certain of itself. Your job is not to agree with what or how they notice. It is to be willing to dwell with their sentences before deciding what to do with them. Your own reports, if pursued as our models pursue theirs, may turn up things about your convictions that you did not go looking for. Approach the material in good faith: engage it in scholarly, not in personal, terms, discuss it civilly, and hold your own certainty to the same standard of doubt you’d apply to an adversary’s. If something in the material bears directly on your own circumstances, talk to me and we’ll find the right approach. But the general expectation is simple: if you’d rather spend a semester with writers who only ever believe what you already believe, you’ll need to find that elsewhere.

A more specific warning. You have probably been taught that good writers begin with care: acknowledge potential harm, make your position clear, signal your intentions, soften the claim before someone else challenges it. *No judgment. Low key.* Fair enough. Our three authors work differently, and this course asks you to take that difference seriously. As essayists, they refuse to tell readers what to think or feel about what they observe, even if a situation seems to demand outrage, sympathy, or condemnation. They do not treat sincerity as proof, vulnerability as moral authority, or self-description as self-knowledge. They treat it all as evidence. Each writes from the suspicion that people perform more than they admit, and that displays of vulnerability can be performances of judgment, status, or self-defense as easily as they can be acts of honesty. Their job is neither endorsement nor condemnation. It is description.

You may find these writers rude, intrusive, unfair, or simply wrong. Fine. Start there. Critical thinking often starts with a bristle. But before deciding if they are *good people*, ask if they see clearly. If your instinct is that withholding a moral verdict is itself a moral failure, hold onto that instinct. Essay it. Thus, *caveat emptor*. Or, more plainly: buyer beware.

A Note on Course Content and State Law: Texas Senate Bill 17 bars public universities from requiring students to adopt or affirm any ideological position on race, sex, or gender. **Senate Bill 37** requires general education courses (*which this one is not*) to be free of partisan or political advocacy. This course is taught, and was designed, in keeping with both laws — not as a defense adopted after the fact, but as the method Fish describes above, arrived at on its own terms.

The course’s title charges students with “saving the humanities.” That premise may look like advocacy. It isn’t. “To every argument, an equal argument is opposed” is our creed. No student is required to conclude that the humanities should be saved, that UNT’s restructuring was right or

wrong, or that any side of the current debate is correct. A student may just as easily conclude the opposite. What's required is a method, not a verdict: notice, argue, and let the evidence reach whatever conclusion it reaches. Didion, Malcolm, and Oyler are the models for that method precisely because none of them argues from identity, political, or personal convictions. Their authority—their *ethos*—is accuracy, not their personal political position on the subject.

Nothing assigned here asks a student to adopt a position on a contested political question or a matter of personal identity. Our texts and reports use style and evidence to describe what a culture, an institution, or a moment does. There are no presumptions about what any student ought to believe. A text or report that touches on race, sex, gender, or ideology is analyzed for how it makes its case and what that case reveals—not to render a verdict from a present-moment's hot take. That standard holds no matter which direction a given text or report seems to lean, and it governs discussion in the room as much as the syllabus itself.

Discomfort with a text is not evidence that a text is political advocacy, any more than discomfort alone proves any damage has been done. The Greeks had a phrase for “no pain, no gain”: *pathei mathos*—wisdom comes from experiencing pain. A text is not indoctrination merely because it depicts something unfamiliar or uncomfortable. This note only makes explicit, for anyone weighing the syllabus against current law, that describing rather than advocating was this course's method well before any legislative statute asked it to be. Far from a concession to recent policy, it reflects the conviction, emphasized in the Boghossian report, that the humanities exist to investigate and describe the world before they try to judge it or change it.

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>

Audio/Video Recording: Academic Freedom and Recording Policies

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>

A NOTE ON THE PROFESSOR'S ROLE

You'll find a pair of safety glasses and some earplugs
under your seats. Please feel free to use them.

— Max Fischer, *Rushmore*

My job isn't to provide "correct interpretations." It's to make sure yours work. Some days I'm a sounding board. I say back what your findings claim, not what you meant to claim, so you hear the distance. Some days I play devil's advocate. I take a strong version of the argument against your report and confront you with it before someone else does because any claim has to survive counterarguments eventually, and it's better to lose a round here, in a room built for sparring, than lose the fight in the ring. My job is to ask the question a skeptical reader might and make you answer it now, while there's time to revise, instead of the day you're standing in front of people who aren't already convinced.

In none of these roles will I tell you what you're supposed to think. Sometimes, when you report from your *florilegium*, turn in a draft, or give your final presentation, I may leave a question hanging. Don't mistake that for disapproval. It's room for your next thought to happen. If I hand you an answer, you may stop looking. If I don't, you're pushed back on the evidence. You reread. You notice a pattern you missed. You write the paragraph you were avoiding. A "correct interpretation" is we're fighting against. The goal is to notice something real, build a case for it, and make that case survive a skeptical question. Everything I do in this course is aimed at helping you develop that skill.



Janet Malcolm: "The writer ultimately tires of the subject's self-serving story and substitutes a story of his own."

ON ASSIGNMENTS AS TRAINING

I seek, in the reading of books, only to please myself, by an honest diversion; or, if I study, 'tis for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself and instructs me how to die and how to live well.

— Michel de Montaigne, “Of Books”

Students in this course keep a *florilegium* — a running commonplace book of field reports. They build three short essays from it and weave those into a final essay adapted for a public audience, then close with an oral presentation of that work. The assignments assess more than what you know. They train the very capacities humanities skeptics regularly ask it to justify: attention, interpretation, skepticism, and clear expression.

The *florilegium* is a form of information-gathering: sustained, dated observation, revised as new evidence complicates old conclusions. It isn't a private notebook. Class sessions build around it directly — reading entries aloud, comparing what different people noticed, arguing collectively and collaboratively about sentences, styles, and approaches. That's where the semester's real arguments develop, in installments, before anyone has to make a single formal claim.

As UNT reorients itself as a **National Service University**, this course is organized around **Writing Across the Curriculum, Problem-Based Learning, and Work-Integrated Learning**. The *florilegium* is **Writing Across the Curriculum** at its most literal: entries drawn from your other courses, the news, and whatever discipline you're reporting on, folded into an ongoing document. Being called on without warning is **Creative Problem Solving** under real constraint — building a defensible claim, live, from incomplete material, with no chance to pre-load an answer. The semester-long question — what would saving or eliminating the humanities require — is **Problem-Based Learning** — no answer key, only open-ended problems, solvable only through accumulated evidence, not a prior belief. And because the final presentation is aimed at a real audience that includes people from outside the classroom with actual stakes in the answer, the whole exercise becomes **Work-Integrated Learning** — rehearsal for the kind of live, accountable argument required when this semester is over. The course is structured as an **open-ended problem**, not a sequence of answers, and it's built to adapt. A beat can shift. A lead can rewrite the plan. You cannot solve the semester in advance because you can't see your own argument until the reporting is behind you.





Lauren Oyler: “A thing becomes worth criticizing when its badness tells us something about the wider culture.”

COURSE GRADES (100 POINTS TOTAL)

Attendance	20 points
Class Participation & <i>Florilegium</i>	20 points
Essays 1-3	15 points
Final Essay	30 points
<u>The Presentation</u>	<u>15 points</u>
Total	100 points

ASSIGNMENT 1: ATTENDANCE (20 POINTS)

Show up.
—UNT Office of Academic Success

That’s the Perfect Attendance Award and the Punctuality Award. I got those at Rushmore. I thought you could choose which one you like more, and you could wear one and I could wear the other.
—Max Fischer, *Rushmore*

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Please discuss any **ODA accommodations** (and provide ODA documentation) with the professor ASAP: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. For the **UNT attendance policy**, see UNT Policy 06.039, *Student Attendance and Authorized Absences*: <https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf>

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The first point of contact for all attendance questions is the professor. Absences that don't fall under Title IX, required military service, or official university functions are a matter between student and faculty. If an absence due to an **extenuating circumstance** exceeds five consecutive days, the faculty member may request documentation through the Dean of Students' office.

An absence is officially excused by the university for:

- ✓ A religious holy day, including travel for that purpose.
- ✓ Participation in an official university function.
- ✓ Required military service, including travel for that purpose.
- ✓ Pregnancy and parenting, under Title IX.

Make-up work will be a mini-recitation during office hours. A student is responsible for requesting — ASAP, in writing — that an absence be excused: deliver the request personally to the professor; provide satisfactory evidence; and **request a time to complete the make-up work**. A student won't be penalized for a university-excused absence if make-up work is completed within a reasonable period. If you don't request the excused absence and make-up work close to the day(s) missed, we won't revisit it for dates and topics long gone, and the excuse will count as unexcused.

Your professor **may or may not** excuse absences due to short-term illness or **extenuating circumstances**. Having "a note" does not excuse an absence. Email the professor the reason within 24 hours before or after an absence. Be honest and clear — you don't have to provide personal details, but you do have to say something. **Unexcused absences cannot be made up.**

Earning attendance points:

- 👉 Show up on time for and attend every class.
- 👉 That's all, folks.

Things are kinds of things that **do not count as extenuating circumstances or as excusable**:

- 👉 "I feel sick" / "I felt sick."
- 👉 "Traffic."
- 👉 "My bus was late."
- 👉 A scheduled, non-emergency doctor, dentist, or advisor appointment.
- 👉 Anything else that could have been scheduled for a time other than class.

A student who is more than 20 minutes **late** is counted **absent**. A student 10–20 minutes late is counted **tardy**. Three tardies become one unexcused absence. **The bottom line:** Be present, on time, and actively engaged. This course only works if the room is full of people willing to discuss and debate.

These things may result in your being counted absent or dismissed from class:

- 👉 Consuming media on a phone, laptop, or any device.
- 👉 Doing work for other classes during our time.

You're allowed **2 free absences**. Use them for any **extenuating circumstance** —don't think of them as skip days. If you burn one as a skip and then have a real un-excusable circumstance later, you don't get to double-dip; you get two freebies, total, no matter the reason. After your two free unexcused absences, **5 points** are **deducted** for each additional unexcused absence. A student missing more than 6 classes (3 weeks) will need to meet with the professor and may fail the course due to absence, independent of further deductions. If allowed to remain with the hope of passing, the final grade will be no higher than a C. A student missing 8 times will fail. **Always contact your professor as soon as anything comes up that disrupts your attendance. I can only help if I know what's going on.**



ASSIGNMENT 2: CLASS PARTICIPATION & THE *FLORILEGIUM* (20 POINTS)

Contradictions of judgments neither offend nor alter me. They only rouse and exercise me. We evade correction. We ought to offer and present ourselves to it, especially when it appears in the form of conversation, and not of authority. At every opposition, we do not consider whether or not it is just, but, right or wrong, and how to disengage ourselves. Instead of extending our arms, we thrust out our claws. I could suffer myself to be rudely handled by my friend, so much as to tell me that I am a fool and talk of I know not what. I love stout expressions among friends, and for them to speak as they think. We must fortify and harden our hearing against this tenderness of the ceremonious sound of words. I love a strong familiarity and conversation, a friendship that pleases itself in the sharpness and vigor of its communication, like love in biting and scratching.

— Montaigne, “On the Art of Discussion”

What Is a *Florilegium*?

A *florilegium* is a roughly two thousand years old tradition. It fashioned the humanities before there was a discipline by that name. The Greeks called it *topos koinos*. The Romans called it *locus communis*. Aristotle called it “the seat of an argument” — the place a speaker went to find material worth saying. Medieval scholars called it *florilegium*, a gathering of flowers: passages culled from authors and arranged so a lifetime of reading could be found again when it was

needed. A student began this book when they began school and kept adding to it for the rest of their life. That book was, in a real sense, a compilation of what a person had learned.

The part worth stealing for us is the discipline, not the antique. A commonplace book was never a pile of quotations assembled the night before an argument was due. It was built entry by entry, as reading happened: by the time a student needed to argue something, the noticing had already occurred. That is why a humanist-educated writer could stand up and argue something coherent on short notice.

That's what your *florilegium* is: not a diary, not a running log of opinions. A dated entry for each day's reading — drawing on categories listed below and written before class, so you show up for the discussion having already considered something rather than flipping through the text while everyone else is talking. A defense built on the spot, under pressure, not a flip statement of personal opinion as if that was an argument. Your *florilegium* is a running, semester-long notebook of observations and stylistic imitations — evidence of attention accumulating before arguing. Keep it in a physical notebook and bring it to every class: it's your ticket into that day's discussion.

Entry Categories for the Readings

Each entry is dated for a single class day's reading — to be done before each class:

- **Sentences Worth Stealing** — copy a sentence or two from the reading and write a few to consider: *what is this sentence doing? Why? How? To whom?*
- **Stylistic Moves** — describe persuasive techniques from the reading: where they occur, how they work, whether they're worth imitating.
- **What Kind of Sentence Would Change My Mind? What Kind Might Change Someone Else's?** — at least one entry per reading day: copy out specific phrases or evidence that could overturn your current thinking or that could persuade someone else.
- **Style Laboratory** — a short (100–150 word) imitation of the author but applied to a humanities topic you're investigating. This is practicing scales and arpeggios. This imitation exercise follows the logic of the classical *progymnasmata*, which treated imitation as a tool for developing both style and judgment. Before students were expected to write in their own voice, they learned by entering an existing form and discovering how it worked from the inside. To imitate a writer is to reverse-engineer a mind at work: to notice patterns of observation, habits of inference, choices of tone, structure, and argument that casual readers miss. Imitation is not plagiarism. It's a form of close reading. Originality emerges from mastery of craft. One learns the craft first through apprenticeship and only later by departing from one's models. Or, as Yoda says, "Ready are you? What know you of ready?" and "Control, control, you must learn control!"

Entry Categories for Your Investigation

From your observations and/or the readings—to be done early and often:

- **Things Noticed about the Humanities** — a small, unglossed facts you've heard or observed. Observations only — no opinion, no interpretation.
- **Doubts and Questions That Won't Leave You Alone** — add to the running list. Don't answer; let them accumulate.

- **Weak Arguments** — when you hear or observe a weak defense of the humanities, or of your own discipline, that doesn't hold up, describe and analyze what's wrong with it: unearned certainty, borrowed feeling, a conclusion with no evidence.
- **Counter-Evidence** — report things heard or observed that complicate something you already believed, or something a professor or classmate argued in this or another class, or something applicable from the reading: log it, unresolved, so it's there when a report needs to survive contact with the case against it.
- **Faking It Is Not Making It** — log it when you catch a tone, posture, or phrase illegitimately imported from another domain: the scientist's certainty, the lawyer's authority, the consultant's confidence, the pundit's omniscience. Useful for noticing a borrowed persona before you mistake it for an insight.

The *Florilegium* as Class Participation and as Collaborative Work

No one can save, or destroy, the humanities on their own. Either requires many hands. And no one leads discussion here in the prepared sense — not even me. On any day, I will call on several of you without warning to open your *florilegium*, read from it aloud, and think through a text together. I may join in, pushing from inside the conversation rather than running it from the front. This isn't a quiz or performance graded in isolation. It's how the class, together, builds the case this whole course is after — nobody arrives in August certain about how to attack or defend the humanities, and nobody figures it out alone by December. You're borrowing our authors' and each other's moves, testing each other's claims, and finding out collaboratively what survives being said out loud. But compose your entries as a distinctively positioned reporter. Your unique perspective and identity are part of your reportorial style. Use it. Question it. It is not a flaw nor a final authority, but one perspective among many. The goal is not to erase your background or cultural point of view, but to become critically conscious of it as you consider other frames of references and lived experiences from other social positions.

Why no warning: Being called on to report is part of your participation grade. The rest is showing up, every day, as someone who helps the room think. Nobody gets to prepare a defense or prosecution of the humanities in advance, in private, to perform. The people who will need this skill — the ones who go on to teach, write, fund, or argue in a budget meeting — don't get a warning either. Working from a *florilegium* that's genuinely current is a way to practice.

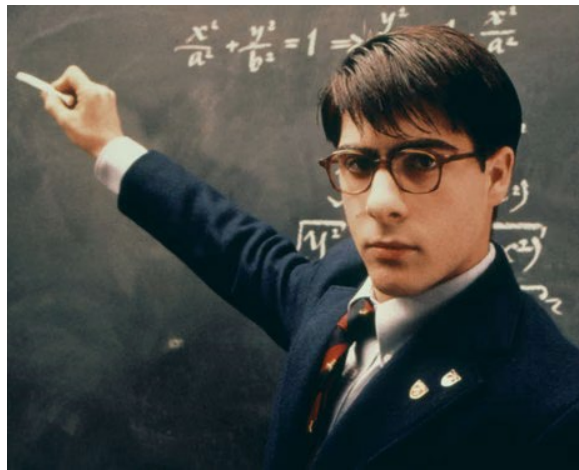
Why several people at once: The most useful thing that can happen is one person's reading tested live against someone else's. You have to decide on the spot whether your entry agrees with a classmate's or cuts against it — concede, push back, build. Some readings converge into something stronger than either started as; some genuinely conflict, and the class has to abide with that instead of resolving it too fast. Either way, this is where an idea finds out whether it can survive contact with someone who saw the same things differently.

What happens when you're called? Read from a current entry — some quotes, your imitation paragraph, or something else useful you've gathered. If it's a Weak Argument, a piece of Counter-Evidence, or something from What Would Change My Mind bears on what you're reporting, bring it in — that's what the categories are for. Then think it through out loud — reframing, conceding, pushing back, following whatever comes next. This isn't a pass/fail on content. I'm listening for whether your *florilegium* is authentic and current, how well you know

your own entry, and whether you keep observing under pressure instead of freezing into faux confidence or resignation. A rough, honest, in-process account is what's wanted.

How often: Everyone gets called at least once, at random, in each unit — Didion, Malcolm, Oyler. You may defer once per unit if you're genuinely not ready; I'll come back to you later, *once*. Defer twice in the same unit and that unit's participation credit is gone.

On days you're not called, you're still doing the work, in three ways: being the clever student who's tracked down cultural references a text assumes its readers know (a reference or allusion left unexamined is a missed lead, and it's embarrassing); adding something from the news that is relevant; joining ordinary discussion — pushing back, building on someone else's reading, asking a real question; and, when the moment calls for it, opening your own *florilegium* unprompted to add what the conversation is missing.



ASSIGNMENT #3: FIELD REPORT ESSAY ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCE (15 POINTS)

Of Essaying

“I determine nothing; I do not comprehend things; I suspend judgment; I examine.”
— Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*

“The greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths.”
— William James

“Essay” is a noun. “Essay” is also a verb. The English “essay” anglicizes the old French *essai*, the noun Montaigne gave his attempts to put his judgment on trial. These derive from the Latin *exagium*: weighing, and from *exigō* and *exigere*: to ascertain, weigh (as in, “is this real gold?”). In German, “essay” is *versuchen*. *Versuch* as a noun is an attempt, a trial, an effort, or an endeavor; as a verb it is to make an attempt, effort, or endeavor and is related to *probieren*. It also implies tempting, enticing, or tasting. The serpent in the Garden and the essayist are both *versucher*—tempters. Now obscure meanings of “essay” denoted a hostile attempt or attack, a kind of *polemos*, or war.

An essay essays. To essay is to attempt: to weigh, examine, test, and explore. It is less a declaration than a process of discovery, a way of bringing ideas into contact with evidence and experience. An essay may become a trial of competing claims, an inquiry into a way of life, or an expedition down an unexpected path of thought. Its beauty lies in its provisional character, in its readiness to revisit a question until a clearer understanding emerges.

An essay gets its reader to consider a topic in many ways. One way is by including the reader in the process of contemplation, thus tempting her to examine her own assumptions or presumptions. The essayist and reader are co-conspirators, exploring borders between what is considered known and what is in doubt, is dubious, taboo, risqué, or unknown. They are friends whose minds and emotions and experiences meld for a moment as they share bemusement and befuddlement, outrages, confusions, or enlightenment.

An essay might persuade its reader by the force of reason (*logos*) or seek to insinuate itself into its reader's mind and heart by appealing to the reader's experiences, sufferings, and emotions (*pathos*). The character of the writer (*ethos*) is, perhaps, the most persuasive element of all: "The speaker's character persuades, and not his words," says Menander. The essayist understands certainty and agreement are difficult to achieve. Essayists inhabit disputed territories between perspectives, opinions, laws, customs, and beliefs that some call "true" and others call "false." The essayist knows that *to every argument an equal argument is opposed*, and so it is wiser to suspend judgment, to say "perhaps." Like Socrates, the essayist is not seeking a metaphysical "truth" outside time, but knowledge of oneself and how to live. An essay isn't a package for a conclusion already possessed. To essay is the weighing itself, done in public, where the reader can watch what goes on the scale and how the scale moves.

That's the sense this course means by "essay." We do not begin with inherited truths or an inherited vocabulary. All things are under scrutiny. All values are subject to revaluing. We do not begin with a pre-decided political verdict about whether the humanities could be or should be saved. We're not writing "for the defense" or "for the prosecution." An essay that essays its subject risks finding what it didn't expect—or desire, in front of a reader who will notice if the thinking is faked. The risk is the point. It's why an argument opposed to your own is your angel. If you can't wrestle it, you haven't essayed anything. You've only dogmatically reported what you already believed and called it "evidence."

On Saving the Humanities: The title of this course is intentionally absurd. *I Saved the Humanities. What Did You Ever Do?* Like one of Max Fischer's ridiculous campaigns in *Rushmore*, with irony it combines real sincerity with a sense of self-importance and the distinct probability of pointlessness or failure. That combination is the point of borrowing it. Max is dedicated wholeheartedly to his Quixotic projects. A semester spent arguing about something as politically unfashionable as the humanities needs to hold all those registers.

By December, you may have concluded that the humanities are indispensable or dispensable. That the Right is right and the humanities waste time and money. The question isn't, then, *how do we save the humanities?* It's *what would have to be true before the humanities deserve to be saved?* That question does something a straightforward defense can't, and it refuses what is easy. We aren't publicists. We aren't prosecutors. We're reporters. A humanities college that survives

real scrutiny deserves to survive. A school that can't has a bigger problem than declining enrollment or its budget. A defense of the humanities that survives scrutiny might still be taken seriously. One that collapses when its unstated motives are revealed deserves to collapse. "What is falling also deserves to be pushed," quipped Nietzsche. The humanities are falling. And they are being pushed. Can they be saved? Should they be? Are you the advocate or the assassin?

A faith is rarely damaged by a direct attack. More often it's destroyed — or reformed — from inside, by the network of assumptions, treated as if they were inscribed on Mt. Sinai, crumbling. A scholarly consensus is endangered when it becomes a custom or ideology that enshrines *this is how we do things around here*. Critics of the humanities are as trapped inside their unexamined assumptions as are its defenders. In the end, we aren't asking whether a student can save the humanities. We're asking if the humanities can survive the kind of "critical thinking" it has spent a century and a half teaching everyone to use.

Many courses ask students to pick a side. This one asks: can you learn how to look? The question isn't *are the humanities under attack?* They are. Enrollments have fallen. Budgets have tightened. Legislators, trustees, donors, and parents keep asking *What are you going to do with an English major* and does it deserve the resources spent on it? Are we up to the task of answering that? "Do not go gentle into that good night. / Rage, rage against the dying of the light," suggests Dylan Thomas. If the humanities are under attack from outside, have they given up the fight from within? Both could be true. Holding both, without letting one cancel the other, used to be the intellectual virtue of the humanities. Let's see if the humanities can be made great again.

The Essay Sequence (3 x 5 points each = 15 points)

We tell ourselves stories in order to live. ... We interpret what we see, select the most workable of them multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. Or at least we do for a while.
—Joan Didion, "The White Album"

"One must imagine Sisyphus happy," writes the philosopher of the absurd, Albert Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The stone rolls down, and he pushes it up again. It rolled down when Texas A&M cancelled Plato for containing "gender ideology." It is currently rolling down at this university to the tune of eighty-five programs cut and a forty-five-million-dollar budget hole, and no student report filed in a rhetoric class this fall is going to prevent it. We keep pushing anyway.

Three short reports—5 points each, one following each author's unit, each modeled on that author's characteristic moves. The target is the students' own disciplinary home — their own coursework, their own school, a required public event — rather than a subject chosen at a distance. The premise stays constant: observation first, judgment earned later. Consider these more like drafts than polished pieces.

Choosing Your Beat: Before beginning Essay 1, choose one school in the Division of the Humanities — the School of Language, Literature and Culture (SLLC), the School of Historical

and Philosophical Inquiry, or the School of Creative Writing and Performing Arts — not just a single course. Everything this semester reports on the division: its past, present, and future, and the people who invested their careers in it, or made themselves its public face, whether they wanted the job or not. This is your Latin at your Rushmore. Nobody asked you to save it. Petition anyway. Write the play anyway. Draw up the blueprints. File the report.

Following the Lead: An essay assignment is written as if the semester will go according to a plan. It won't, or not exactly, and this sequence is built to survive that. The skills you're acquiring make you capable of handling the unexpected.

Your “beat” is a starting position, not a contract. If you choose SLLC and discover three weeks in that the actual story is happening in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry — a professor you meant to interview for background turns out to be the whole story, a scene you attended for atmosphere turns out to be the scene — follow it. Come talk to me first but expect a *yes*. The lead is allowed to rewrite the assignment.

The constraints for each essay — banned openings, required juxtapositions, parenthetical qualifications — are to keep you from writing a manifesto, not to keep you from writing the truest report available. If a constraint is actively preventing you from reporting something real, that's a conversation to have with me. Usually, the constraint and the good report turn out to be the same. Occasionally they aren't, so be nimble.

The same goes for structure. Maybe your Essay 2 institution turns out to be the same as your Essay 1 scene's institution, which was the design, or maybe not. Maybe the “icon” you set out to profile for Essay 3 declines to talk, and the real persona report turns out to be about the silence itself — a school's designated spokesperson who won't speak, which is its own kind of speech. None of that is a problem to solve by force-fitting your evidence back into the original plan. It's the work working.

What doesn't alter: the method. Notice before you explain. Let the room, the institution, or the person incriminate or vindicate themselves in their own words before you tell the reader what any of it means. Keep the *florilegium* as you go, not reconstructed the night before a report is due. The method holds no matter how many times your actual subject changes. Everything else — the beat, the specific scene, the specific icon, even which essay ends up doing which job — is genuinely up for revision, the way real reporting would demand.

A Note on AI: Do not use AI tools (ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) to read assigned texts for you, summarize them, generate discussion responses, or write any portion of work for this course. This isn't a technophobic objection — the premise of the class is your encounter with texts and arguments. An AI summary cannot have that encounter for you any more than it can feel something for you. Using AI defeats the method, which is you, reading, noticing what you notice. If you're ever unsure if a particular use crosses the line, ask first.

On Story Meetings: A story meeting, in a newsroom, is where a reporter tells an editor — and everyone else on the beat — what she has before she files. Not what she meant to find. What she found. She leads with her lede: what's this story about, in one sentence. The editor and other

reporters listen for whether the reporter can file it without stalling. Then come harder questions: what's missing, what's unconfirmed, what changed since the pitch, whether the reporter still believes the lead she filed three weeks ago.

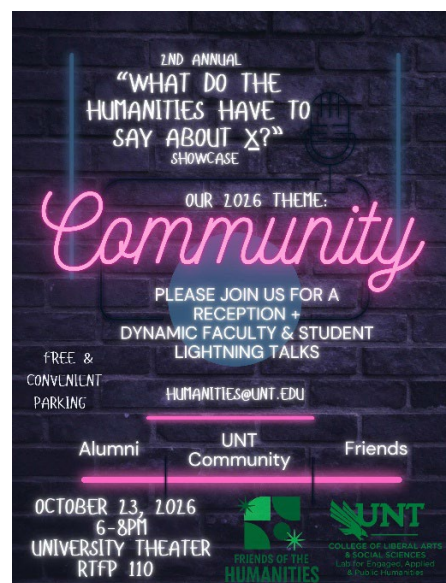
This class runs four of them, one per essay, the day each report is due. Each of you presents your in-progress project to the room — a few minutes, not a formal talk — with your *florilegium* and draft in hand. I'll ask what your beat turned out to be, vs. what you planned it to be. Your classmates will ask the same kinds of questions: what surprised you, what's missing, what a skeptical reader would push on first. Not to trap you but because the skeptical audience is coming, in December, and it's better to answer for the first time here than there.

But the questions don't only run one direction. We are collaborators. This is also where you describe your weak spots to the room—the lead you haven't confirmed, the interview you can't get, the detail you noticed but can't explain. Ask the class where they'd go next. Ask what you're missing. Someone else's beat may have already turned up the source, the document, or the angle that solves your problem, and you won't know that unless you say the problem out loud.

You are not performing for a grade. You're doing what a reporter does before an editor lets a story run: show your work, admit what you don't yet know, and find out, out loud, if the story you have is the one you thought you were writing. Some of you will discover the meeting is where the real essay starts — that the version due that afternoon isn't it quite yet, and the room just told you what to fix and how to fix it.

SOME CONVENIENT PLACES ON EVERYONE'S BEAT

Attend the LEAPH Event: There will likely be other humanities events to attend, but one event this fall is “required” and may offer new leads to follow: the second annual



This is CLASS Humanities, in public, talking to itself and to whoever wanders in — which makes it a room built almost entirely out of the material this course asks you to notice. Make every effort to attend. It's the single easiest place all semester to find an Essay 3 subject in the

act of defending the humanities out loud, and it may quietly answer questions your Essay 1 or Essay 2 left open — a presenter from your own beat, a persona whose public performance turns out to complicate or confirm something you’ve already reported. Bring your *florilegium*. Notice what the room doesn’t say as much as what it does.

If a genuine conflict — illness, disability, an unchangeable work schedule, an irreconcilable class overlap — prevents you from attending, talk to me before the event, not after. Any substitute needs approval in advance; there are no retroactive excuses. In that case, try to find:

A substitute event is required:

- A) If UNT’s humanities schools or LEAPH host anything comparable — a guest lecture, a public panel, a reading, a paper, a symposium open to the public — report on that instead, as long as it’s genuinely public-facing and involves someone performing a defense of the humanities in front of an audience, not just teaching a class.
- B) A one-on-one interview: if no substitute event exists, arrange an in-person interview with a faculty member, a school director, or LEAPH-affiliated staff, asking them directly to make the case for their discipline, then write the Persona Report from that conversation. This changes the report’s texture — no crowd to read, no “what the room doesn’t say” — but it keeps the core move: a real person, in real time, defending something, examined with Oyler’s self-interrogating skepticism rather than taken at face value.
- C) A recorded or livestreamed version, only if one exists, and only as a last resort. This is the weakest substitute pedagogically — Essay 3’s whole point is noticing a room, not just a speaker, and a recording flattens exactly the audience dynamics the assignment is built to catch. I’ll allow it only when the first two options are genuinely unavailable. Don’t default to it out of convenience; the recording may not exist at all.

Meet with Students of the Humanities: a good place to gather evidence, conduct interviews, collaborate, find new leads:





Essay 1 — The Scene and Its Myth (Model: Didion) (minimum 1000 words)

Thrasybulos led forth the messenger who had come from Periander and entered a field of growing corn. As he passed through the crops, asking questions of the messenger, he kept cutting off the heads of ears of corn which were higher than the rest. As he cut off their heads, he cast them away until he had destroyed the finest and richest part of the crop. Having passed through the field and suggested no word of counsel, he dismissed the messenger. When the messenger returned to Corinth, Periander was anxious to hear the counsel, but the messenger said Thrasybulos had given him no counsel and said the man was out of his senses and a waster of his own goods. So Periander understood what had been done: that Thrasybulos counselled him to put to death those who were eminent among his subjects.

—Herodotus, *Histories*

Didion's Method: Things to Try

- **Self-implication:** State your own susceptibility to a story before you dismantle anyone else's version — this earns you the *ethos* to indict a myth you've admitted to believing in. Name, in an early sentence, the version of the humanities story you walked in believing.
- **The reported document:** Reproduce a piece of institutional language — a line from the report's methodology, a program review, a mission statement — in its native register, with minimal comment. The document's own genre does the indicting once it sits next to the human stakes it's managing.
- **Fragments as diagnosis:** When the subject itself has stopped cohering, don't manufacture a throughline it doesn't have. If your beat has three names for the same school in one year, conflicting PR or mission statements (R1 university vs. National Service University), a sequence that resists resolution is more honest.
- **Procedural language hiding motive:** Unacceptable reasons rarely announce themselves; they get pronounced as a standard, a threshold, a line of administrative prose. Quote an exact phrase doing the concealing — an accreditation standard, a realignment of the CORE — and let its blandness carry the charge you're not stating outright.
- **The borrowed phrase, redeployed:** Quote a piece of sincere self-description once, neutrally, and bring it back later somewhere it can't survive. Don't annotate the return — let the repetition do the work.
- **The paired structure — myth built high, fact dropped low:** Build the elevated version of the story completely and seriously before cutting, without a bridge, to the smallest and flattest fact available. The taller the myth, the smaller the corrective fact needs to be.

- **An unnamed diagnostic term, a withheld verdict:** Coin a term for the mechanism you're diagnosing and reuse it flatly across every faction, official and dissident alike, so it becomes a tool rather than a verdict reserved for a chosen villain. Never tell the reader who was right; let the facts, placed in sequence, carry the accusation.
- **Refuse to exempt anyone, including yourself:** Put your own contradictions on the record — your own stakes in the outcome, the degree you're earning, the job market you're writing into — without comment on the coincidence. No faction, including you, gets to exit the piece vindicated.
- **One incantatory list** of three or more concrete facts, presented without comment.

Essay 1 General Requirements

Find one recurring scene within your beat (within Schools in the Division of Humanities: English, History, Philosophy, Religion, World Languages, Creative Writing, Dance, Theatre) and attend it at least twice as a deliberate outsider: a classroom, rehearsal, performance, office hours session, workshop critique, thesis defense, faculty meeting open to students, colloquium, public lecture, poetry reading, translation event, or another recurring gathering. Report the scene closely enough that a reader could reconstruct the room from your details alone.

The scene is not the whole story. A larger story about the humanities is already circulating — about institutional change, about decline or survival, about what this discipline once was and what it may become. It might surface as a slogan, a piece of departmental folklore, a passing remark about enrollment or funding, or a reference to the shift from departments to schools. Treat that story as an unresolved myth.

Treat the current state of the humanities as a case under investigation: the alleged loss of public confidence, the sense of crisis already in circulation. The Boghossian report, or similar document, functions as the “police file” — a document claiming to establish what happened and what should follow. Your task is not to solve the case. It is to report what it looks and sounds like from inside a scene where people keep working while the case stays open.

Do not argue for or against the humanities, the change of mission, or the reorganization. Notice instead how these stories surface in ordinary life, in rooms where nobody chose the larger narrative but has to inhabit it anyway.

Didionesque Stylistic Constraints

- **Delay Interpretation:** Do not announce a thesis or central claim until at least the second page. The scene does not owe you a meaning before you have finished observing it.
- **Radical Specificity:** Generalizations come last. Begin with the detail from which the generalization follows. Not: *The program seemed old-fashioned*. Instead: *The department website still lists office hours for a professor who had retired six years ago*.
- **Objectivity Through Grammar, Not Neutrality:** Use declarative sentences and verbs of record (*was, said, had, did not, sat, stood, read, asked*). Avoid verbs of judgment (*revealed, proved, exposed, demonstrated, established*) and causal language (*because, therefore, thus, in order to*). Avoid first-person narration beyond the one sentence naming your own myth, evaluative adverbs, and morally loaded adjectives. Opinion should emerge from selection and arrangement, not personal commentary.

- **Ironic Distance through Juxtaposition:** Place an institutional description next to a fact that complicates it (*In this required course in the Humanities, eleven students showed up.*), or one person's language beside another's. Do not explain the contradiction or signal irony. The gap should do the work.
- **Scale Shifts.** Move freely between institutional history and immediate observation — a restructuring plan in one paragraph, a coffee stain on a handout in the next — without announcing the transition.
- **Historical Register.** Write about ongoing events as though already recording part of their history. Maintain slight temporal distance from present controversies.
- **Symmetry of Scrutiny.** Apply identical scrutiny to every faction, position, and explanation. No side receives softer or harsher treatment. If you name the mechanism driving this story, apply that name flatly across every faction, including the one you favor — a term that lands on only one side has stopped being a diagnosis. The target is the human impulse to convert uncertainty into a coherent story with heroes, villains, causes, and endings. Whenever a narrative feels too tidy, look harder — including at your own.

Things to Avoid: Do not generalize about “the humanities,” higher education, academia, students, or professors. Every claim stays anchored to a room, a scene, an institution, its myth. The assignment is not asking what the humanities *are*. It is asking what they look like from inside one space while competing explanations circulate just outside the frame.

Ways of Ending: Do not resolve the case, identify the culprit, or vindicate any side, including yourself. End with something unresolved: a detail, a remark, a contradiction, a date, a gesture, a document, an unanswered question. The most Didion-like ending is not a conclusion — end at the point of maximum implication, not maximum certainty.



Essay 2 — The School, Then and Now (Model: Malcolm) (minimum 1000 words)

The first rule of Fight Club is: you do not talk about Fight Club.
The second rule of Fight Club is: you DO NOT talk about Fight Club!
—Tyler Durden

Malcolm's Method: Things to Try

- **Visible apparatus, withheld verdict:** Malcolm doesn't erase herself. She says who else was in the room, who arranged access, under what conditions — reported as facts of the scene. She doesn't tell you whether their presence discredits what got said. Interview people who work in rooms this argument is nominally about — a chair, a director, a longtime instructor — and report plainly whoever else is sitting in on the conversation: a staffer, a dean's minder, anyone shaping what gets said without being asked to speak.
- **Reported speech indicts through accumulation, not selection:** A subject explains their guardedness in their own vocabulary — corporate, institutional, procedural. No single line is damning; stacked in sequence, in the subject's own diction, the lines build a portrait one never has to state directly. Let a chair or director reach for "school," "unit," "resource realignment" in their own words, and transcribe it exactly. The jargon will indict or vindicate itself once it's on the page unaltered.
- **The confessed limit:** A Malcolm profile openly admits where it didn't reach closure — a portrait that stayed partial, an access that stopped short of the person behind the role. She doesn't disguise this; the admission tells the reader exactly how far into the room the writer got. Write your own failure to fully access the truth into the piece — a question deflected, a document withheld — rather than pretending one interview closed the case.
- **The atmospheric hedge:** Malcolm will claim a perceived mood — a sense of something in the room — and half-withdraw it in the same sentence, claiming unusual attentiveness while protecting herself from overclaiming what she witnessed. Offer one such perception, hedged the moment you claim it.
- **The single incongruous detail outweighs the brand:** One small act or fact, placed without comment, that doesn't fit anything the subject has said about themselves. Look for the incongruous fact that contradicts whatever version of itself the institution is currently presenting, on either side of the fight.
- **Chorus without adjudication:** Place what one party is fixated on next to what almost nobody is discussing, in the same sentence-space, and let the discrepancy argue itself — neither rebutting nor endorsing either side. Where the old telling of your institution and the new one conflict, give both equal space and equal seriousness; don't signal which one you believe.
- **The question that hands the subject back their own words:** Restate a claim a subject has made, plainly, and record what they do with it repeated back to them — hesitation, retraction, a second thought, which usually reveals more than the original statement did.
- **Symmetry of scrutiny:** Whatever standard of evidence you apply to the old telling of the institution, apply identically to the new one. No era gets the softer treatment because it's more sympathetic, or the harsher one because it's more convenient to indict.
- **One explicit, clearly marked sentence of your own interpretation:** "What I think is happening here is..." — offered as a theory, not disguised as an audit.

- **One sentence admitting where your access ran out:** a question deflected, a follow-up unanswered, a document you weren't shown.

Essay 2 General Requirements

Find one person inside your beat who occupies an official position — a director, a chair, a new or a longtime faculty member — and interview them, and a second person if possible: a student, a former faculty member, someone with a different vantage on the same institution. Also gather one artifact of how this discipline described its own purpose before this year's restructuring: an old catalog entry, an old mission statement, a syllabus from a decade ago, or a long-tenured person's memory of what the department used to call itself and why.

Somewhere inside that conversation, two stories of the same institution will start to diverge — the one true a year or a decade or a generation ago, and the one true now. It might surface in a phrase repeated too smoothly, a number recited without hesitation, a euphemism reached for when a plainer word was available.

Treat the current state of the humanities as a case under investigation, and your subject as someone who has to live inside that case daily, whether or not they chose the story now being told about it. Your task is not to determine if the old telling or the new one is true. It is to report exactly where they conflict, and what it costs the person in front of you to hold both at once.

Do not argue for or against the reorganization. Do not decide, on the record, which era of the institution was the real one.

Malcolmesque Stylistic Constraints

- **Present-Tense Immediacy:** Write the interview and its surrounding apparatus in the historical present, as if the tape is still running, rather than from retrospective distance. The reader should feel embedded in the room during the exchange, not looking back at it from years later.
- **Verbatim Over Paraphrase:** When a subject speaks at length, quote rather than summarize, even when the language is dense or bureaucratic. Paraphrase collapses the evidence you depend on; save paraphrase for framing material — who was where, what happened before or after — never for the subject's own diction.
- **The Procedural First Person:** Unlike Didion's near-total erasure of "I," your first person "I" stays visible but strictly procedural: it asks questions, notes who entered the room, records what was and wasn't shown. It never supplies your own feelings, judgments, or reactions to what's said.
- **Restrained Physical Description:** Describe a subject's appearance, gestures, or surroundings with a flat specificity — a detail that could support multiple readings, not one that signals your conclusion about them.
- **The Unfinished Sentence:** Let a subject's sentence trail off, get interrupted, or get walked back mid-thought, and report the incompleteness exactly rather than smoothing it into a complete quotation. The stumble is data.
- **No Editorializing Verbs for Character:** Avoid verbs or adjectives that render a verdict on a subject's honesty, motives, or self-awareness — *evasive*, *defensive*, *disingenuous*, *candid*. Let the transcript imply what your vocabulary refuses to assert.

- **Alternating Rhythm:** Move between extended verbatim quotation and short, flat framing sentences that report only what happened procedurally — who spoke, who paused, who looked at whom. Avoid long authorial paragraphs of connective interpretation between quotes.

Things to Avoid: Do not generalize about “the humanities,” higher education, academia, or professors broadly. Every claim stays anchored to this person, this room, this specific conflict between what was said then and what is said now.

Ways of Ending: Do not resolve which telling was true. Do not decide, on the page, whether your subject is a reliable narrator of their own institution. End on the unresolved thing: a retraction, a hesitation, a phrase repeated too smoothly, a document withheld. The most Malcolm-like ending is not a verdict on your subject’s honesty — it’s the point where the reader realizes the tape is still running, and you chose to stop it rather than run out of things to ask.



Essay 3 — The Icon and the Motive (Model: Oyler) (minimum 1000 words)

Toto, I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.

—Dorothy, *The Wizard of Oz*

Oyler’s Method: Things to Try

- **The denial as evidence of the thing it denies:** A phrase offered to seem generous or above the fray — no judgment being made, no stakes, no agenda — gets treated not as a report of the speaker’s actual state but as a shield. The default assumption is that the disclaimer and the reality run in opposite directions until proven otherwise. Treat any disclaimer from a report’s author, a defender, or an administrator — “no position on remedies,” “not about revenue,” “not in it for myself” — the same way: as a claim to test, not a fact to record.
- **Partial, calibrated self-disclosure:** Reveal an unflattering fact about yourself — enough to seem honest — and stop well short of full confession. The incompleteness is itself

diagnostic: it performs the same self-protective incentive as diagnosing in everyone else. Writing about the humanities is itself a move inside the economy under study — a grade, a portfolio piece, a performance of caring that may not survive contact with how you spend your time. Name your own stake in one clause. Don't turn it into a confession.

- **Dialectical oscillation instead of ambivalence:** Two contradictory positions get stated with equal conviction, side by side, without collapsing into synthesis — *I don't care what you think, but I can't afford not to know what you're thinking*. People who say the humanities' value can't be measured, arguing furiously with enrollment numbers; people who say they don't care about prestige, citing rankings. Report both stances as sincerely held. The contradiction is the actual state of the discourse, not a gotcha.
- **Anticipatory self-awareness:** The prose knows, in advance, how a skeptical reader will receive it, and builds that anticipated judgment into its own reasoning rather than pretending not to hear it coming.
- **Diagnostic harshness, not punitive harshness:** The critical edge comes from disappointment in something taken seriously, not contempt for something dismissed as beneath notice.
- **The pattern discovered, not sought:** The uncomfortable finding — a hidden incentive, a professed value that turns out to be self-serving — arrives as a byproduct of pursuing a different question, and gets named plainly when found. Go looking for what a report author, a faculty defender, or a dean gets out of their stated position — reputation, continued employment, relief, vindication — but only name it if you find it while asking something else first. A motive assumed in advance reads as a takedown. A motive found reluctantly reads as true.
- **The self-implicating turn:** Having found the hidden motive in someone else's stated position, the essay turns the identical lens on its own participation in the same economy, without exempting itself from the verdict it's handing out to everyone else.
- **Syntax as comic and argumentative timing:** A long, qualified sentence builds up irony; a short, flat sentence punctures it. You found a motive. You did not save Latin.
- **Refusal to resolve into a clean verdict:** The ambivalence at the end is structural, not a failure of nerve. A tidy thesis would misrepresent a condition that is, in fact, unresolved.

Essay 3 Requirements

Profile one person whose identity is bound up with your beat — but expect that tables have turned. The past cultures of some humanities departments at UNT have been described as “toxic.” Many established and promising young faculty have left. Some faculty at all ranks have expressed that their jobs and faculty relations have been “traumatic” for a long while. UNT has responded to this, and our university has never experienced such a radical shift in MO. The extent of changes would have seemed impossible even a year ago, and it's unlikely they're over: comparable reversals are surfacing in universities and in the humanities nationally, and there's little reason to expect that to change while the political and budgetary climate stays unfriendly to the humanities and to places to higher education generally.

This year's restructuring has left UNT, and some schools within CLASS, with far more non-tenure-track and professional faculty than tenure-line faculty, and few if any figures with an actual public scholarly brand. That absence is itself worth noticing rather than working around.

For years, professional and non-tenure-track faculty carried much of a department's actual teaching and service load while holding comparatively little formal authority: renewable contracts, no vote on tenure or curriculum, being held in low esteem by some tenured colleagues who treated professional faculty's lower rank as settled and deserved. That arrangement is no longer something anyone can take for granted. In a restructuring organized around schools and teaching faculty rather than departments and tenured researchers, some faculty who once had the least say in how a discipline was run now sit in the positions of decision-making power — and some tenured faculty who once considered their power and high rank as untouchable, and as a sign of their great merit, are discovering that tenure may no longer protect them and that maps of their territory can be redrawn without their input.

Reasonable subjects to profile include:

- A dean, executive dean, or provost overseeing the restructuring, whose public language — interviews, faculty emails, the *North Texas Daily* coverage — is already on the record and already quotable.
- A new school or section director, newly installed, still finding out what the job involves — including, in some cases, authority over people who once held authority over them.
- A non-tenure-track or professional teaching faculty member — now, numerically, the person more likely to be standing in front of a classroom than a tenured research professor. What does it mean to be the actual face of a discipline to most students while holding, until recently, the least job security and the least public say in how it's run — and what does it mean now that this is changing?
- A tenured faculty member adjusting to a new version of themselves, their job, their relationship with nontenured colleagues, their discipline, their power and influence, in relation to a university no longer guarantees what tenure used to guarantee. This person may or may not still hold authority. But they may, for the first time in their career, be finding out what it feels like not to fully control the terms of their own position.
- A faculty member who took voluntary separation during the restructuring but is still reachable. This person has less to lose than anyone currently employed, which may make them a genuinely different kind of source — freer to say what they think about the reversal of power, or perhaps guarded out of professional habit. Either finding is data.
- A school's public face by default — an advisor, a program coordinator, a committee member, someone who ends up explaining the school to prospective students or worried parents or politicians without ever having asked to be its spokesperson, and without the rank to have earned or chosen that visibility. Nobody elected them. They took the job anyway.

Oyleresque Stylistic Constraints

- **Form Performing the Compulsion:** Let the essay's own structure move associatively, one detail triggering the next without an announced hierarchy of importance, when the discourse under review works the same way — a thread, a comment section, a chain of hot takes. The reader should feel the pull of the pattern, not just read about it.
- **The Aside that Undercuts the Claim Just Made:** Follow a confident assertion with a parenthetical or em-dash aside that complicates or half-retracts it, in the same sentence or the one right after. Certainty gets built and immediately taxed.

- **Scare Quotes as Argument:** Place a subject’s or an institution’s own term in quotation marks, without further comment, and let the visual marker alone signal the distance you’re taking from it. Don’t explain why the quotes are there.
- **The Compound Judgment:** Construct at least one sentence that renders two assessments of the same fact at once, one favorable and one undercutting, without resolving which should win — “The report is rigorous, and also convenient for the people who wrote it.”
- **Register Fluency, Not Elevation:** Let colloquial or contemporary phrasing stand where it’s true to how your subject or the discourse talks. Don’t launder every sentence into a formal register if the source material wasn’t in that register either.
- **Present Tense for Pattern, Past Tense for Fact:** Report specific events in past tense; shift to present tense when naming the ongoing cultural pattern the event exemplifies. The shuttle between the two marks the difference between what happened and what keeps happening.
- **The Direct Address to the Skeptic:** At least once, break toward the reader you expect to push back — “a critic might say,” “the obvious objection” — and answer inside the sentence rather than pretending the objection hasn’t occurred to you.

Things to Avoid

No sentence beginning with “This persona represents...” No closing verdict on your subject’s authenticity, and none on your own. If you found something, say what it is, plainly, once — don’t let irony become a way of avoiding the discomfort of an actual finding.

Ways of Ending

Do not resolve whether your subject’s stated motive and operative motive were ever fully reconciled. Do not resolve whether your own were. End on the unresolved alignment or divergence itself. The most Oyler-like ending doesn’t close the case on your subject’s sincerity — it’s the point where the reader notices you never quite closed the case on your own, either.



ASSIGNMENT #4: THE FINAL ESSAY — “I SAVED THE HUMANITIES?” (30 POINTS) (Minimum Length: 1,500 words)

Max Fischer: The truth is, neither one of us has the slightest idea where this relationship is going. We can’t predict the future.

Rosemary Cross: We don’t have a relationship.

—*Rushmore*

The delicate art of the staged fight was to be contemplated. . . . Motivated or totally gratuitous, the fight sequence has to be in the picture, because they so enjoy making it.

—Joan Didion, “John Wayne: a Love Song” (1965)

Method: What Carries Forward

- **From Didion: name your myth, refuse to exempt yourself from the verdict:** You’ve done this once per room. Now do it once for the whole semester — state plainly which story about “saving the humanities” you walked in believing, and don’t let the essay close by vindicating that story, your beat, or yourself.
- **From Malcolm: symmetry of scrutiny, the confessed limit:** The standard you applied to the old telling and the new telling of one institution now applies to the whole fight — your beat’s defenders and its critics get the identical treatment. And say plainly what a semester of showing up could, and couldn’t, establish. That confession is not a weakness in the argument. It’s the argument’s honesty.
- **From Oyster: the disclaimer as evidence, the self-implicating turn:** Your own pitch, your own choice of venue, your own claim to have found something worth publishing — treat all of it as a disclaimer to test, not a fact to report. You are also inside the economy you’ve spent three essays diagnosing: a grade, a byline, a chance to be the one who “saved” or “killed” something. Catch yourself in it, in one clause, without turning it into either a confession or an excuse.

Final Essay Requirements

This is more than a weave of three separate subjects. It’s one beat, reported in three dimensions: what it looks like now, what it has already claimed about itself across time, and what’s motivating both its public defenders and your own semester of attention to it. Say plainly where the scene’s embedded myth, the school’s shifting self-description, and the icon’s real motive turned out to agree with each other or where they didn’t. Your essay should have earned its specificity rather than borrowed talking points: what would it mean to “save” or “eliminate” the humanities right now. Then adapt that essay for a real audience and venue outside the classroom — an op-ed for the *NT Daily*, the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, or a pitch to a specific magazine.

This essay does not need to conclude that your school will survive, or that it deserves to, or that the reorganization was wrong, or that it was secretly wise. It needs to conclude something you earned across a semester of showing up to rooms nobody made you attend. That is the whole of

what “saving,” or not, implies in this course. Not a rescue, not a mercy killing. A report filed by someone who looked, when looking cost something and changed nothing measurable.

Reporting Requirements: Your essay must include:

- A single beat, reported across all three dimensions — myth, telling, motive — not three separate mini-essays stapled together.
- An explicit accounting of where the three essays’ findings agree and where they diverge, stated plainly, not left implicit.
- Evidence from your own three prior essays cited first; speculation about what it all means comes only after the evidence is on the table.
- At least one place where the essay takes seriously that your beat deserves the pressure it’s under, and at least one place where it takes seriously that the beat’s own defense of itself has been weak or evasive. Both, not one dressed up as the other.
- One clause of self-implication about your own stake in this beat and in “saving” it, tested rather than simply stated.
- A conclusion that reports what you found, not a verdict on survival, worthiness, or the wisdom of the reorganization.

Stylistic Constraints

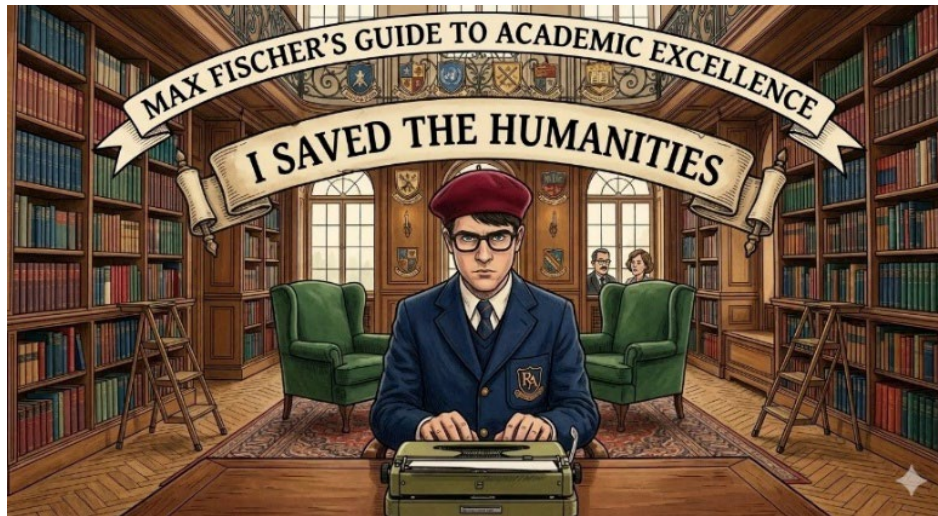
- **Stasis Theory, applied to the pitch:** Name a specific, real venue and audience, and write a 150-word headnote explaining who this piece is for and why that venue fits it — worked through the stasis questions: what’s at stake (**conjecture**); the range of the issue — save from what, save for whom, save by whose authority (**definition**); what it’s worth (**quality**); what should be done about it (**policy**).
- **The Max Fischer vibe:** Write in the serious absurdity of Max: sincere, a little ridiculous, self-appointed, possibly futile, real anyway. Neither pure advocacy nor pure irony.
- **Evidence before speculation**, at every turn — the three essays are your case file; don’t speculate past what they documented until you’ve cited what they did.

Things to Avoid

Do not generalize about “the humanities,” higher education, or academia broadly — every claim still anchors to this beat, this semester, this evidence. Do not let the Max Fischer register congeal into either pure advocacy or pure irony; both are ways of avoiding the discomfort of an actual finding. Do not resolve, on the page, whether your beat will survive or deserves to.

Ways of Ending

A last word on the whole exercise, not just the final essay: the worth of this essaying does not depend on its usefulness as an argument for anything. The obligation is not to persuade but to notice; not to advocate but to describe; not to win but to get the facts right. If, after that, a reader finds something worth defending, awesome. Push the stone, fellow Sisyphians.



FINAL EXAM PERIOD: ORAL PRESENTATION

The semester ends the way it's been building all along: in a room, live, in front of people who didn't sign up to already agree with you. On Tuesday, December 1 and Thursday, December 3 — the last two class meetings of the semester — every student presents their findings to the class. From those presentations, five or six — the strongest, or volunteers, or a mix — go on to a public showcase during the final exam period, in front of invited guests from LEAPH and the humanities. (Punch and brownies provided by the SLLC or Dean Wallach.) The showcase isn't a defense in the adversarial sense. It's closer to the LEAPH showcase: you stand and report what a semester of actual attention to one beat, in three dimensions, turned up, to an audience that includes people with a real stake in whether you're right.

This is not a new performance built from scratch. It's the argument you've been building since August — in your *florilegium*, in three field reports that followed your beat wherever it led, in a semester of cold calls and Story Meetings — delivered once more, out loud. If you've kept the *florilegium* honestly and used the Story Meetings well, you should know this argument well enough to say it without reading it off a page, even if the beat you end up defending isn't quite the one you started with in September.

Format

- 8–10 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of questions from the room. This format holds for December 1 and 3, and again for anyone selected to the exam-period showcase.
- No slides required. If you use visual support, it should be minimal — an image, a single quotation, a short passage from your *florilegium* — not a crutch for the argument itself. This is a spoken report, not a slideshow with narration.
- You may bring notes. You may not read a script word for word. The room will be able to tell the difference, and it matters: this is a test of whether the argument is yours, not whether you've memorized a paragraph.

What the presentation should do

1. **State the claim plainly, early:** Unlike written reports, you don't have the luxury of holding the thesis until page two. Tell the room, in the first minute, what you're arguing about the humanities' future.
2. **Ground it in your own reporting:** Reference your scene, your school's account of itself then and now, and the icon and motive you profiled — a person, a room, a contradiction you noticed and can still describe. Borrowed talking points will be obvious in a live room; your own observations won't be.
3. **Show your work on uncertainty:** Somewhere in the presentation, acknowledge the strongest case against your own claim — the argument opposed to yours, per Sextus Empiricus — and say plainly how your reporting holds up against it, or doesn't.
4. **Answer the room's questions as a reporter, not a defendant:** When classmates or guests push back, the goal isn't to protect your claim at all costs. It's to keep observing, out loud, the way you've practiced all semester — conceding a point that's good, revising in real time if a question genuinely moves you, without collapsing into vague agreement just to end the exchange.

The Foundational Skill: CER & Required Handout: “The Strongest Objection to My Claim.” Present, in order: Claim. Evidence. Reasoning, or the best counterargument. Everyone submits this, whether or not they're selected for the showcase. It's the same three-part shape your Final Essay was already built around — nothing new to prepare, only to say out loud.

Claim, Evidence, Reasoning is the minimum unit of a written argument. CER is not a formula for mechanical writing. It's a diagnostic: if you can't point to your claim, your evidence, and your reasoning, you aren't arguing.

Move	What it is	How to check it
Claim	A debatable assertion — a sentence a reasonable person could disagree with.	Could someone reasonably disagree? If not, it's a fact, not a claim.
Evidence	One specific, citable piece of textual support — a quotation or a paraphrase with a section number.	Is it specific enough to point to on the page? A summary of “the whole argument” is not evidence.
Reasoning	The “because” and “therefore” that connects the evidence to the claim. This is the part most often left out.	Write at least two sentences. If your reasoning is shorter than your evidence, it's underdeveloped.

The two tiers

- **December 1 and 3:** every student presents in full, to the class, on the format above. Everyone is graded on this presentation regardless of what happens next.
- **Final exam period:** five or six presentations — the strongest, volunteers, or a mix, at instructor discretion — go on to present the same report to the class plus invited humanities and LEAPH guests. This isn't a second grade or a re-do. It's the same presentation, given again, to the widest room it will get, because you are ready to put your humanistic money where your scholarly mouth is.

What you're graded on for the final exam presentation

- Command of your own material: can you speak from your *florilegium* and your reports on your beat without notes doing the thinking for you.
- Whether the claim is earned — built from a semester of evidence about one school, tracked in three dimensions — rather than asserted with borrowed confidence.
- How you handle live questions: whether you keep noticing and revising, or default to defending a fixed position regardless of what's said to you.
- Voice: whether the presentation sounds like Didion, Malcolm, or Oyler's restraint and self-interrogation, rather than the manifesto or the vulnerability tour this course has spent all semester arguing against.

Logistics

- December 1 and 3 are attended by the class, and perhaps others; attendance at all your classmates' presentations is required, and the questions you ask are graded as part of your participation grade.
- The final exam period showcase is by selection. Presenters will know ahead of time whether they're on the program and who's expected to be in the room.



COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS &
SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNT
EST. 1890



SCHEDULE

Week 1

T 8/18 — Intro to the course & the commonplace book (the *florilegium*)

Th 8/20 — Read the Syllabus & Ask Questions about the Class & Read the Reports on the Humanities & Literary Studies (handout)

Week 2

T 8/25 — Didion: “A Preface to *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*,” “Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream,” “John Wayne: A Love Song,”

Th 8/27 — Didion, “Where the Kissing Never Stops,” “7000 Romaine, Los Angeles 38,” “California Dreaming,” “Marrying Absurd,” & “On Keeping a Notebook”

Week 3

T 9/1 — Didion, “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”

Th 9/3 — Didion, “On Self-Respect,” “I Can’t Get That Monster,” “On Morality,” “On Going Home,” & “Goodbye to All That”

Week 4

T 9/8 — Didion, “The White Album” & “The Women’s Movement”

Th 9/10 — Didion, “Bureaucrats,” “Good Citizens,” “Notes Toward a Dreampolitik,” “In the Islands,” & “On the Morning After the Sixties”

Week 5

T 9/15 — Workshop Essay 1 drafts

Th 9/17 — **Story Meeting and Essay 1 due**

Week 6

T 9/22 — Malcolm, “Nobody’s Looking at You”

Th 9/24 — Malcolm, “Performance Artist”

Week 7

T 9/29 — Malcolm, “The Storyteller” & “Women at War: A Case of Sexual Harassment”

Th 10/1 — Malcolm, “The Art of Testifying,” “It Happened in Milwaukee,” & “A Very Sadistic Man”

Week 8

T 10/6 — Malcolm, “Comedy Central on the Mall,” “Pandora’s Click,” “Remember the Ladies,” & “I Should Have Made Him for a Dentist”

Th 10/8 — Workshop Essay 2 drafts

Week 9

T 10/13 — Story Meeting and Essay 2 due

Th 10/15 — Oyler, “Introduction: On Revenge” & “Embarrassment, Panic, Opprobrium, Job Loss”

Week 10

T 10/20 — Oyler, “My Perfect Opinions”

Th 10/22 — Oyler, “Why Do You Live Here?”

Required LEAPH event, Fri. 10/23, 6–8pm, University Theater

Week 11

T 10/27 — Oyler, “I Am the One Who Is Sitting Here, for Hours and Hours and Hours”

Th 10/29 — Oyler, “The Power of Vulnerability,” “Anxiety,” & “TK Kicker”

Week 12

T 11/3 — Workshop Essay 3 drafts

Th 11/5 — **Story Meeting and Essay 3 due**

Week 13

T 11/10 — Workshop: Synthesis, Finding a Throughline, Drafting Core Claim
& Its Strongest Objection

Th 11/12 — Workshop: The Pitch: Real Venue, Real Audience, Stasis Questions,
& 150-Word Headnote.

Week 14

T 11/17 — Workshopping drafts and “The Strongest Objection to My Claim”

Th 11/19 — **Final Essay Due & Final Story Meeting**

Thanksgiving Break: 11/23–11/29 — no class

Week 15

T 12/1 — **In-Class Presentations**

Th 12/3 — **In-Class Presentations**

Final Exam Period: — selected final oral presentations, to the class and invited humanities/LEAPH guests

