

**First Year Writing 1
Spring 2026**

**Dr. Richard Joines
Office/Hours: Lang 407b
T & Th 8-9 by appointment
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**ENGL 1310.010
T/Th 9:30-10:50
LANG 304**

**ENGL 1310.003
T/Th 11:00-12:20
WH 214**

**ENGL 1310.026
T/Th 2:00-3:20
WH 113**

Required Materials = \$5

- Small notebooks for in-class drafting—acquired from the professor, yours to keep
- Legal pads for final drafts—acquired from the professor, yours to keep
- Stories with prompts—provided



Course Overview: The Art of Essaying & of Knowing Thyself

To every argument an equal argument is opposed.
—Sextus Empiricus

To *essay* (as a verb) is to test, to try on, or to try out. It is to weigh issues on a balanced scale, to seek, to attempt, to analyze, to probe, to examine, and to experiment with opposing arguments. An *essay* (as a noun) is an endeavor, an exertion of one's intellectual and imaginative powers. It is a singular place to put one's judgment and values on trial. As noun and verb, essaying can be a drifting down a long path of thought or a winding way that proves the truth of the old maxim "There is nothing certain but uncertainty, and nothing more miserable and arrogant than man."

Essaying is, and essays are, then, a performance, an action—a purposeful, guided process of self-discovery. There we rehearse the ideas, beliefs, values, and opinions we might call—for a while, at least—"true." The essay and the essayist are less interested in final conclusions than in the experience of wondering about oneself while wandering among others' concepts and texts, each with their own ideas, desires, and fantasies.

Ralph Waldo Emerson asks in "Experience,"

Where do we find ourselves? Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus. From the mountain you see the mountain. We animate what we can, and we see only what we animate.

To understand oneself—to know thyself and fashion what Socrates calls an “examined life”—is to explore our perspectives in relation to those of others. In this course, we notice how our moods become our lenses—our biases and reactions—and how they “paint” what we each call our “reality.” We do this by critically examining ways we are entangled with other people, our inherited beliefs, and our desires. Our goal is to use the critical skills associated with essaying and critical reading to make our entanglements and experiences more interesting.

The reading and writing in this course will focus on the craft of writing as a craft of living by zeroing in on turning points in students’ lives. Students will critically consider questions of how (and why) they make sense of things the way they do. They’ll reflect on their sense of self, their social identities, social roles, and social expectations in relation to the course readings. There will be ample time for close textual analysis, in-class writing, and for one-on-one conferencing.

AI and Academic Integrity

*We allow ourselves to rely so strongly
upon the arm of another that we
destroy our own strength and vigor.
—Montaigne, “Of Pedantry”*

Academic Integrity policy: <https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity/index.html>. Use of AI (or a web platform with AI enabled) to write, edit, or revise is plagiarism (the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own), is cheating, unauthorized assistance, and academic misconduct violating UNT’s Honor Code: <https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity>. You may get points deducted, fail an assignment, fail the course, and/or have your academic dishonesty violation sent to the Academic Integrity Office. AI is everywhere. For this class, disable it; purposefully avoid it.

ODA

Please discuss any **ODA accommodations** (and provide ODA documents) with the professor ASAP ><https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access><.

The Course Readings: Provided by the Professor

The class will read, write about, and incorporate evidence from three short stories as they compose their narrative, observation/description, and analysis essays. I will provide these stories as handouts, with study questions geared toward critical thinking and writing tasks involved for each mode.

- John Updike’s “A&P” (for the narrative)
- Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” (for the observation/description)
- Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron” (for the analysis)

Spending time analyzing serious, canonical, and memorable texts will help train writers as critical thinkers and literary intellectuals. The essay prompts will allow students to dialogue with and use evidence from the stories in their nonfiction essays and to compare/contrast with evidence from their own experiences (for the narrative), their observations (for the observation/description), and their own critical and conceptual thinking (for the analysis)

The Essay Assignments' Relation to Course Readings

The Narrative and John Updike's "A&P"

This assignment asks students to choose a moment that had a significant impact on their self-image, sense of identity, or was in some way a turning point in their lives. Updike does all this in a dramatic fashion. Students will gain insight into their own experience as they work through the story, reflect on their experience, and compose an essay that incorporates their own and Updike's narratives into a critical analysis of a turning point in their own lives.

The Observation/Description and Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery"

The observation essay will describe a witnessed scene of social conformity and/or realization about one's social identity and compare (or contrast) that to the Jackson story. Spending time analyzing "The Lottery" will help students "allegorize" and reflect on their own observations. They will use the skills of description and re-description to arrive at their own unique interpretations of what they've observed.

The Analysis and Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron"

The concept analyzed will be something like "equity" or "equality" or "what do we—and our Founding Fathers—mean when we say *all men are created equal*?" Students will work through stasis theory and set up an argument using common topics that analyzes the Vonnegut story alongside their ideas about, or experiences with, the concept. They might argue seriously or satirically, following Vonnegut's lead.

The Reflection Essay

Finally, students will consider what they accomplished over the semester—the power of crafting stories and persuasive cases—and assess their ways of composing their craft of living.

Process-Based Grading & Attendance Policy

First Year Writing 1, ENGL 1310, is writing course. It is activity based, not lecture based. The activity for Dr. Joines' writing course is composing and revising essays—by hand—during class meetings.

Attendance is mandatory. [Show up \(https://www.unt.edu/success/show-up.html\)](https://www.unt.edu/success/show-up.html). Your professor will take attendance for each class period. Absences will have a serious impact on your individual essay grades, and you will miss out on learning skills introduced for each. Students are responsible for all the information provided or changes announced in class.

Contract Grading for the Major Essays: 25 points each

ENGL 1310 professors teach writing as a practice and process; thus, student work will get assessed on more than the final product. The effort students put into the writing process is encouraged, acknowledged, and rewarded.

Instead of grades hinging on a single polished final product, students' dedicated effort and work will be rewarded for their active participation in the writing process. A goal is to foster the experience of learning and gaining skills by relying on the students' accountability to their current and future selves. This class aims to create space for inclusive practices, ensuring that all students—regardless of background or prior preparation—can succeed through serious effort and engagement.

Students will get as much face-to-face input into their writing and thinking as they would like during in-class conferences. These conferences may be used to reimagine ideas, improve writing practices, take risks, revise, and discover ways to transform weaker strategies into powerful, persuasive ones. The major feedback students will receive about your work will occur during one-on-one face-to-face in-class conferences. There will be minimal comments on the final submitted draft, and there will be no further revisions. If students would like to discuss essays after they're graded, they will need to make an appointment during office hours.

If a student completes the work for each essay in the manner and spirit of the task, they should be pleased both by the essay they've composed and the grade they've *earned*. If a student misses class (or does not participate fully in class), turns in assignments late, forgets to do assignments, or does not follow the prompt and/or labor contract, they will get the lower grade they *deserve* (—and isn't getting what one deserves the best definition of "justice"?).

If learning is why we are here, grade anxiety and worry about "mistakes" or "getting *it* right" can get in the way. Each student is different, and there is no single "right way" to compose an essay. An "A" in freshman comp doesn't end up creating a useful algorithm for an engineer, nor does it help a scientist write a successful research grant, or a urban planner to make arguments to combat urban blight. Grade grubbing is also not a useful skill in "the real world." Adaptability, experimentation, innovation, and problem solving are, however—so we'll emphasize that.

Our goals include things like:

- ✓ To become better writers more concerned with the craft of composition than the grade
- ✓ To make the writing classroom an encouraging, fun, and creative environment, a place of support with fellow writers who value the arts of writing and intellectual development
- ✓ To receive evaluative feedback from an experienced writer and incorporate that into your writing process
- ✓ To be motivated by one's own sense of seriousness and intellectual exploration instead of the anticipation about "what the teacher wants" or the anxiety about the grade "the teacher *gave* you"

- ✓ To take risks with your writing and ideas; to value what it means to learn by bumping up against “failure” and figuring things out for yourself; to feel the reward of working at the limits of your skill set
- ✓ To try new styles and approaches that make you sound like a creative, engaged, intellectual adult capable of conversing with other intellectuals about questions and topics that matter
- ✓ To provide responsible effort and consistency and do what was asked of you in the spirit it was asked

All In-Class Work and Writing Needs to Meet the Following Conditions:

- ✓ **Be Complete and On Time:** You agree to turn in—on time and in the appropriate manner—complete essays, drafts of writing, or other work assigned that meet all assignment expectations.
- ✓ **Be Revised:** Your job is to revise your thinking and writing, to reshape, extend, complicate, and clarify your ideas. Revision is not mere copy editing. It isn’t just making corrections or touch ups. It is deeply reimagining your project.
- ✓ **And Also Be Copy Edited:** Your final draft should be well copy edited—strive to eliminate spelling, grammar, and punctuation “errors” and for concision and clarity.

The Process Grade—The Little Blue Notebooks—10 points x 4 essays = 40/100 points

- ☞ Show up on time, prepared for each class meeting: bring writing materials and actively participate in class discussion and/or in-class writing activities (5 points)
- ☞ At least one in-class conference (for serious revisions, not just copy editing) (5 points)

The Product Grade—The Blue Legal Pads—15 points x 4 essays = 60/100 points

- ☞ Significance of the topic, strength of the argument, and consideration of audience and the rhetorical situation (5 points)
- ☞ Structure of the essay, copy editing, and following instructions on the prompt and those provided in class (5 points)
- ☞ Expert use of narrative, descriptive, and analytical skills and concepts introduced with each essay and mastery of the rhetorical means of persuasion: *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, stasis, and/or the common topics (5 points)

Deductions (if applicable): Attendance and Missing Class

Points will be deducted from each of a student’s major essay assignment for every unexcused absence during the weeks of working on the essay: **Miss a class, lose 2.5 points per unexcused absence.** You must be present during final draft weeks. Missing during that time will seriously impact your “product” grade and will be excused only for extreme circumstances.

UNT Attendance Policy

For further information, read the UNT Policy: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>

The first point of contact for all students should be the professor. Absences that do not fall under Title IX, Required Military Service, and Official University Functions, are deemed a matter between the student and their faculty member. If the absence is due to an extenuating circumstance that exceeds 5 consecutive days, the faculty member may request the student provide documentation through the Dean of Students' office.

An absence will be excused by the university for:

- 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

A student is responsible for requesting—ASAP—an excused absence in writing:

1. Deliver the request personally to the professor
2. Provide satisfactory evidence to the professor to substantiate the request for an excused absence.
3. Request make-up work for the day/s missed, complete it, and submit it

A student will not be penalized for a university-excused absence if make-up work is submitted. Students will be allowed, when practicable, to complete make-up work or an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable period after the absence. This may involve out-of-class time.

Your professor *may or may not* excuse other absences due to short-term illness or other extenuating circumstances. Having a note does not excuse an absence. Promptly send your professor an email explaining the reason for your absence within 24 hours. Be honest and clear (but you do not have to provide personal details).

Attendance “resets” for each major paper.

Grades

Narrative Essay	25 points
Observation/Description Essay	25 points
Analysis Essay	25 points
<u>Self-Reflection Essay</u>	<u>25 points</u>
Total	100 points

<u>Total/Final Grade</u>	<u>Process/Product Grades</u>	<u>Final Draft Grades</u>
A = 90-100 points	4.5-10 points	22.5-25 points
B = 80-89 points	4 points	20-22 points
C = 70-79 points	3.5 points	17.5-19.5 points
D = 60-69 points	3 points	15-17 points
F = 0-59 points	0-2 points	0-14.5 points

Schedule (students are responsible for any changes to the schedule or course policies announced in class or on Canvas)

Week 1

T 1/13—Syllabus + Course Business

Th 1/15—Lynda Barry exercise + Elements of Rhetoric

Week 2

T 1/20—Read Updike’s “A&P” + Style and Narrative Strategies

Th 1/22—Discuss Updike’s “A&P” + Themes and Composition Strategies

Week 3

T 1/27—Drafting the Narrative In-Class & Conferencing

Th 1/29—Drafting the Narrative In-Class & Conferencing

Week 4

T 2/3—Drafting the Narrative In-Class & Conferencing

Th 2/5—Drafting the Narrative In-Class & Conferencing

Week 5

T 2/10—Compose Final Draft of the Narrative

Th 2/12—Compose Final Draft of the Narrative & Submit

Week 6

T 2/17—Read and Discuss Jackson’s “The Lottery”: + Style, Skills, Devices

Th 2/19—Discuss Jackson’s “The Lottery” + Themes and Strategies

Week 7

T 2/24—Drafting the Observation/Description In-Class & Conferencing

Th 2/26—Drafting the Observation/Description In-Class & Conferencing

Week 8

T 3/3—Drafting the Observation/Description In-Class & Conferencing

Th 3/5—Drafting the Observation/Description In-Class & Conferencing

Week 9

T 3/10—Spring Break

Th 3/12—Spring Break

Week 10

T 3/17—Compose Final Draft of the Observation/Description

Th 3/19—Compose Final Draft of the Observation/Description & Submit

Week 11

T 3/24 —Read and Discuss Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron” + Angles

Th 3/26—Discuss Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron” + Themes & Strategies

Week 12

T 3/31—Drafting the Analysis In-Class & Conferencing

Th 4/2—Drafting the Analysis In-Class & Conferencing

Week 13

T 4/7—Drafting the Analysis In-Class & Conferencing

Th 4/9—Drafting the Analysis In-Class & Conferencing

Week 14

T 4/14—Compose Final Draft of the Analysis

Th 4/16—Compose Final Draft of the Analysis & Submit

Week 15

T 4/21—Drafting the Reflection In-Class & Conferencing

Th 4/23—Drafting the Reflection In-Class & Conferencing

Week 16: Final Exam Period

T 4/28—Compose Final Draft of the Reflection & Submit