

ENGL 1310 (Section 601) - First-Year Writing - Fall 2026

Days and Time: T Th 12:45 PM - 2:05 PM

Location: Language Building 223

Instructor: Ross Wilcox, PhD

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Office and Hours: T Th 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM, Language Building 409C

Course Description: First-Year Writing I is an introduction to rhetoric, academic inquiry, and the exploratory processes of expository writing. The class begins with personal inquiry, description, explanation, and observation. Students' writing draws from their memories, experiences, and communities as they practice genre conventions, gain rhetorical knowledge, and develop a framework for producing persuasive writing. Reading and discussing nonfiction texts helps develop their habits of critical reading and familiarity with academic argument. In the final Analysis Essay, students make the move to academic argument by writing about a cultural issue of significance to them. Over the course of the semester, students practice ways to gain critical distance and take an analytical perspective on a topic. They learn to use conventions of academic analysis and to structure claims and evidence in ways that make their findings and arguments clear to their audiences.

Course Overview: The course consists of three Major Assignments:

MA #1: Analysis Essay

For this assignment, you will write a five-paragraph analytical essay about one reading from this course. Rather than simply summarizing what happens in the text, your goal is to explain how the writer uses evidence and rhetorical or stylistic choices to achieve a specific purpose. Through careful reading and analysis, you will examine the choices the writer makes and evaluate how those choices shape the reader's understanding of the text. Ultimately, your essay should answer the following question: **How does the writer use evidence and rhetorical or stylistic choices to achieve a specific purpose?**

MA #2: Learning Narrative

For this assignment, you will write a personal narrative essay that explores an aspect of our course theme through a single, specific story from your own life. Rather than writing broadly about the human condition, choose one moment, one day, or one experience — and let that story carry the weight of a larger idea. Your essay should answer, implicitly or explicitly: *What did this experience reveal to you about being human?*

MA #3: Analytical Essay

For this assignment, you will build on the ideas you explored in MA 2 by moving from exploration to argument. In MA 2, your goal was to investigate a question about the human experience and discover meaningful insight. In MA 3, your goal is to take a position. Although this essay will exceed five paragraphs, you should continue using the paragraph structure practiced in MA 1. Each body

paragraph should focus on one main idea, begin with a clear topic sentence, incorporate relevant evidence, analyze that evidence, and explain how it supports your thesis. Think of this essay as an expanded version of the organizational skills you developed in the five-paragraph theme. Choose a question related to what it means to be human and develop an argument about it. Your argument should present a clear claim, support that claim with evidence and analysis, and engage thoughtfully with other perspectives. Rather than simply sharing an opinion, you will explain *why* your position matters and demonstrate how your evidence supports it. Ultimately, your essay should answer the question: **What do you believe about this aspect of the human experience, and why should your readers care?**

Course Policies

Grading: Your grade will be calculated by a weighted percentage scale. While most individual assignments are graded on a 100-point scale, their ultimate worth is determined by the percentage weight of your overall grade.

- Attendance = 10%
- Analysis Essay = 20%
- Narrative Essay = 20%
- Analytical Essay = 20%
- Participation = 30%

Attendance (10%): Attendance counts towards your grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. You must be here to receive credit.

Essays (60% collectively): While more detailed instructions for your essays will be provided as we progress through the semester, suffice to say now that all your essays will be turned in electronically through Turnitin on our Canvas page.

Participation (30%): The participation portion of this course consists mostly in the form of weekly writing assignments. The weekly writing assignments are low-stakes participation assignments that involve answering questions to materials we cover in class. To receive credit, you will simply type your answers into the assignment window on our Canvas page.

***Note:** For anyone with learning disabilities who may struggle with timed assignments, you need not worry for this class. All in-class writing assignments are free writes, meaning there is no “completing” the assignment, per se. You just write for the allotted time, and you get the participation points. The same goes for the answers you give to questions. There is no minimum amount of words you need to write. Simply answer the questions, and you will get the points.

Attendance: You should come to class because not only is it cool and fun to do so, but your grade will suffer if you skip because you will miss in-class assignments and participation grades. I can excuse some absences, but you must notify me in advance. If you do notify me in advance of your absence, you can make up participation grades. But you can’t just skip class and then try to tell me after the fact that you were sick or some other such excuse. Note also that absences for the following reasons are excusable by university policy:

- Religious holidays; active military service; participation in official university function; pregnancy and parenting; illness or other extenuating circumstances

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is wrong, and you shouldn't do it. If you are caught, you will receive a zero on the assignment. This could mean that you fail the class, given how much the papers are worth relative to the course's point total. If you do choose to plagiarize, I will not lecture you, nor will I lose respect or think less of you. It is a decision that makes no sense, and to me, the big goose-egg zero on the assignment is punishment enough.

AI Writing: Recent advances in Large-Language Model AIs such as ChatGPT have and will continue to alter humans' relationship to writing. Regardless of my own or anyone's opinion of them, they are here to stay. As an instructor of writing and as a writer myself, it's my hope that students compose their own original work. I strongly believe that the challenges associated with expressing one's thoughts and arguments through writing yield tremendous benefits in terms of one's intellectual capacities, critical thinking skills, and one's ability to understand the viewpoints of others. I believe that the skills honed in one's development as a writer are transferable to virtually all occupations, given that critical thinking and communication skills are applicable in any profession. That said, I'm also realistic. I understand that most students are taking FYW because it's required. I also understand the temptation. The official university policy is that you are not allowed to use AI to complete your entire paper. It is considered cheating. We use AI-detection software, and you can get a zero on the paper if you are discovered to have used AI to write your paper.

ADA Accommodation Statement : UNT makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. So, if you are seeking accommodation, you should go to the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) for further assistance. If you have a disability, please feel free to notify me privately. I am 100% willing to work with you in whatever way you need.

Schedule

***Note:** All readings will be done in-class. You won't have to do any outside reading.

Week 1

8/18: Syllabus; Introductions

8/20: Introduction to Rhetoric & Argumentation

Week 2

8/25: Instructions for **MA #1: Analysis Essay**; Reading: Pay Attention to How You Pay Attention

8/27: Reading: Why Do Chatbots use 'I'?

Week 3

9/1: Reading: Is AI Making us Dumber?

9/3: Reading: Chatbots Can Go Into A Delusional Spiral. Here's How it Happens

Week 4

9/8: Reading: How Bad are AI Delusions?

9/10: Discussion: Bias

Week 5

9/15: Discussion: Bias

9/17: Discussion: Logical Fallacies

9/18: **MA #1: Analysis Essay due on Canvas @ 11:59 PM**

Week 6

9/22: Instructions for **MA #2: Narrative Essay;**

9/24: Reading: Why Infinite Choice is Making Us Miserable

Week 7

9/29: Discussion: Precision of Language

10/1: Discussion: Precision of Language

Week 8

10/6: Discussion: Counterarguments

10/8: Discussion: More Counterarguments

Week 9

10/13: Discussion: Writing Introductions

10/15: Discussion: Transitions

10/16: **MA #2: Narrative Essay due on Canvas @ 11:59 PM**

Week 10

10/20: Instructions for **MA #3: Analytical Essay**

10/22: Discussion: Analyzing Art

Week 11

10/27: Discussion: Good Faith vs. Bad Faith Arguments

10/29: Discussion: Good Faith vs. Bad Faith Arguments

Week 12

11/3: Discussion: Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

11/5: Discussion: Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

Week 13

11/10: Instructions for **Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement;** In-Class Screening of Advertisements

11/12: In-Class Screening of Advertisements

Week 14

11/17: Advertisement Presentations

11/19: Advertisement Presentations

Week 15

11/24: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/26: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 16

12/1: LAST DAY OF CLASS

12/3: NO CLASS