

ENGL 1310 (Section 006) - First-Year Writing - Spring 2026

Days and Time: T Th 12:30 PM - 1:50 PM

Location: Wooten Hall 113

Instructor: Ross Wilcox, PhD

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Office and Hours: T Th 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Language Building 409C

Required Texts: *Steps to Writing Well* (digital textbook through Cengage)

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 units.

Unit 1: Learning Narrative

In Unit 1, students explore memory and experience as they write about issues significant to them. Instruction emphasizes the nature, purpose, invention, and organization of writing. Students are encouraged to think about their agency as related to why they write and for whom. They begin to narrate how their personal experiences resonate with larger universal themes. As students engage in inquiry, they discover ways to establish credibility and appeal to the values and beliefs of their audiences. They also reflect on rhetorical situations, on the cultural contexts of writing, and on the perspectives of different audiences. Students use description, narrative, and dialogue to develop insights into their experiences and memories. As they write, students are encouraged to develop good writing processes and to gain critical perspective on themselves. The recommended writing assignment for this unit is a Learning / Literacy Narrative. Optional variations on the assignment include narratives about significant obstacles, mistakes, or important places in their lives.

Unit 2: Observation Essay

In Unit 2, students begin to move from writing based on personal experience to exploring public issues. Through the ethnographic focus of the Unit 2 assignment, students explore relationships between themselves, their communities, and the surrounding culture. They also reflect on how communities think differently about significant cultural and social issues. The recommended writing assignment for this unit is an Observation Essay. Optional variations on this assignment include profiling a person or place, explaining a relationship, or writing an observation report. In the process of exploring public and cultural issues, students learn to develop rhetorical tools of description, dialogue, and narrative. They also learn to offer insights about their firsthand experiences that connect to issues of cultural significance.

Unit 3: Analysis Essay

In Unit 3, students put together all of the rhetorical tools, writing processes, and strategies they have been learning in order to complete an Analysis Essay, the required Unit 3 assignment. In learning to write analytically, students reflect objectively and critically on the personal experiences and observations they have used as evidence in their writing for the first three units. The focus on analysis in Unit 3 connects personal experience and memory to evidence developed from critical reading and source-based research. Because it is the capstone assignment for the course, the Analysis Essay is a required writing project.

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%
- Learning Narrative Essay = 20%
- Observation Essay = 20%
- Analysis Essay = 20%
- Peer Review = 5%
- Quizzes = 10%
- Weekly Writing = 15%

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.

Peer Review (5%): For each essay, you will be automatically assigned two works by your peers. You will read and respond to your peers' work, offering constructive criticism to help them improve their essay.

Quizzes (10%): Throughout the semester, we will complete 10 quizzes in class. The first four quizzes are through Canvas, while the remaining six are through your Cengage digital textbook. Thus, you will need to purchase your Cengage digital textbook in order to complete the quizzes.

Weekly Writing (15%): 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

1/13: Syllabus and Introductions

1/15: Introduction to Rhetoric: Ethos, Pathos, & Logos

Week 2

1/20: Introduction to Rhetoric: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos; Quiz #1: Punctuation

1/22: Instructions for **Essay #1: Learning Narrative; Bias**

Week 3

1/27: Quiz #2: Agreement; Bias

1/29: ["The Simple Truth About Gun Control"](#)

Week 4

2/3: Quiz #3: Strong Subjects and Verbs; ["The Danger of the Single Story"](#)

2/5: Quiz #4: Phrases, Clauses, and Sentence Types ; Logical Fallacies

Week 5

2/10: ["Why Natural Doesn't Mean Anything Anymore"](#)

2/12: Exploring the Naturalistic Fallacy

Week 6

2/17: Quiz #5: Word Logic; Counterarguments

2/19: Instructions for **Essay #2: Observation Essay**; Quiz #6: Causal Analysis

2/20: **Essay #1: Learning Narrative due on Canvas @ 11:59 PM**

Week 7

2/24: Counterarguments

2/26: More Counterarguments

Week 8

3/3: Quiz #7: The Thesis Statement

3/5: Writing Introductions

Week 9

3/10: Quiz #8: The Body Paragraphs

3/12: Precision of Language

3/13: **Essay #2: Observation Essay due on Canvas @ 11:59 PM**

Week 10

3/17: Quiz #9: Development by Example

3/19: Literal and Figurative Language

Week 11

3/24: Quiz #10: Effective Sentences

3/26: Transitions

Week 12

3/31: Instructions for **Essay #3: Analysis Essay**; Good Faith vs. Bad Faith Arguments

4/2: Good Faith vs. Bad Faith Arguments

Week 13

4/7: Instructions for **Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement**

4/9: In-Class Screening of Advertisements

Week 14

4/14: Advertisement Presentations

4/16: Advertisement Presentations

Week 15

4/21:

4/23:

Week 16

4/28: Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

4/30: Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

Week 17

5/5: **Essay #3: Analysis Essay due on Canvas @ 11:59 PM**

5/7: