**English 4605: Advanced Composition (Section 16666)**

Peck Hall 327 | Mondays & Wednesdays | 12:40 – 2:05 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Eric Detweiler

Email: [eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu](mailto:eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu) | Office: Peck Hall 376 | Office Phone: (615) 898-2585

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:15-3:15, Fridays 11:30-2:30,

and by appointment

**Prerequisites**

Completion of 1000- and 2000-level English requirements with a grade of C- or better as well as ENGL 1020 or ENGL 3605 with a B or better.

**Course Description**

MTSU’s Advanced Composition course focuses on approaches to various writing problems posed in advanced university studies and nontechnical professions: essays, proposals, critical reviews, analyses.

In this particular course, we’ll focus on style. Style often gets a bad rap, dismissed as a fancy way of dressing up language in order to disguise the fact that a speaker or writer doesn’t have anything substantial to say. But style is a key part of how language and communication work, and it has played a major role in the history of writing and rhetoric. Over the course of the semester, we’ll approach style from three angles. We’ll begin with a brief unit on linguistic style, considering the shifting stylistic rules that govern Standard English and other forms of English. Next, we’ll focus on rhetorical style, examining the ways that writers and speakers throughout history have described and deployed style’s persuasive potential. Finally, we’ll turn to digital style, exploring how social media, blogs, and other online writing platforms have changed the ways we use language and other forms of communication.

**Course Texts**

* *Performing Prose: The Study and Practice of Style in Composition* by Chris Holcomb and M. Jimmie Killingsworth
* Selected readings available online and through Desire2Learn

**Learning Objectives**

This course will give you a chance to

1. gain an understanding of and appreciation for the conventions that structure a wide range of linguistic and rhetorical styles,
2. develop a vocabulary for discussing and writing about style,
3. analyze the complex rhetorical, social, and cultural function of various styles,
4. practice and adapt to the stylistic conventions of different rhetorical situations, including the emerging conventions of digital spaces, and
5. create and reflect on your own stylistic habits and choices.

**Coursework**

In this course, you will be responsible for two major writing assignments, a number of smaller style exercises, reading assignments and reflections on those readings, and three reflective pieces related to this course’s grading scheme.

Here’s a breakdown of the work you’ll do in the course. Deadlines are included on the course calendar at the end of this syllabus. We will discuss all these assignments in more detail as those deadlines approach.

* 10 Reading Reflections: 250-word reflections on assigned course readings. You will post these reflections in D2L discussion forums.
* Writing Technology Presentation: You will be responsible for introducing the class to a digital writing platform and leading the class in a short writing activity based on that platform. These presentations will be done in pairs.
* 5 Style Exercises: 500-word exercises that will allow you to practice different styles of and approaches to writing.
* Analyzing Style: One of two major writing assignments. A 2,00o-word (not including works cited) analysis of a particular text’s style. You will write two drafts and the first will be workshopped in class.
* Performing Style: The second major assignment. A composition in which you’ll perform a distinctive style that you develop over the course of the semester. That composition will be accompanied by a piece of reflective writing in which you describe and explain the style you’ve developed. You will create two drafts and the first will be workshopped in class.
* Reflection (Learning Record): A beginning-of-semester piece in which you reflect on your history and development as a writer and reader, then set some goals for this course.
* Midterm Self-Evaluation (Learning Record): A mid-semester piece in which you’ll argue for the grade you deserve based on the work you’ve done up to that point.
* Final Self-Evaluation (Learning Record): And end-of-semester piece in which you’ll argue for the final grade you deserve based on the sum total of the work you’ve done in the course.

**Grading**

We’ll be using a portfolio-based grading system called the Learning Record. I’ll provide written or spoken feedback on individual assignments, but not numerical or letter grades. Then, at midterm and during finals, you’ll turn in written arguments for the grade you deserve based on the body of work you’ve done in the course, the grading criteria below, and dimensions of learning and course strands that we’ll discuss during the second day of class. Here are the grading criteria:

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| A | Represents outstanding participation in all course activities, ***perfect or near perfect attendance***, and ***all assigned work completed on time***. Also represents ***very high quality*** in all work produced for the course. LR provides evidence of significant development across all five dimensions of learning. The LR at this level demonstrates activity that ***goes significantly beyond the required course work*** in one or more course strands. |
| B | Represents excellent participation in all course activities, near perfect attendance, and ***all assigned work completed on time***. Also represents ***consistently high quality*** in coursework. Evidence of marked development across the five dimensions of learning. |
| C | Represents good participation in all course activities, minimal absences, and all assigned work completed. Also represents generally good quality overall in coursework. Evidence of some development across the five dimensions of learning. |
| D | Represents uneven participation in course activities, uneven attendance, and some gaps in assigned work completed. Represents inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear. |
| F | Represents minimal participation in course activities, poor attendance, serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available. |

It is difficult to overstate the importance of you familiarizing yourself with these criteria. Note that the “significantly” in the “A” category doesn’t just mean doing everything required for the course really, really well. It means doing *more*. Taking thorough reading notes on every reading we cover this semester, for instance, does not necessarily constitute going “significantly beyond the required course work.” You will have to demonstrate that you’ve done something or some things that have required time and energy beyond what the course requires and that what you’ve done has resulted in demonstrable learning.

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

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| A: 90-100  B+: 87-89  B: 83-86  B-: 80-82 | C+: 77-79  C: 73-76  C-: 70-72  D+: 67-69 | D: 63-66  D-: 60-62  F: 59 and under |

**Late Work**

Because reading reflections and style exercises will contribute to what we do in class the days they’re due, I will not accept them late. There is one exception: I will give you a single two-day extension—no questions asked—on either one style exercise *or* one reading reflection. The same is true with the two major assignments, Analyzing Style and Performing Style, and the three Learning Record assignments: I will give you one two-day extension on one of those five assignments. If you use the extension on a first draft, you will be responsible for finding a way to make up the required peer workshop. If you anticipate any problem meeting a deadline, let me know at least 48 hours in advance. No guarantees, but I am much more likely to be flexible if I can see you are planning ahead.

**Attendance**

If you miss class more than four times, you will not pass this course. Any time you are absent, you are responsible for getting in touch with me to find out what you missed. If you arrive after I take roll or leave class early, you’ll be marked tardy. Tardiness counts as half an absence. As for the four absences you are allowed, you do not need to provide me with an excuse or explanation. Just be sure you get in touch to find out what you missed. As with late work, if you think you’ll have any problem sticking to this attendance policy, let me know in advance. Again, no guarantees, but I am more likely to be flexible if I know you’re planning ahead.

**Students with Disabilities**

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the [Disability & Access Center (DAC) website](http://www.mtsu.edu/dac/index.php) and/or contact the DAC for assistance at (615) 898-2783 or [dacemail@mtsu.edu](mailto:dacemail@mtsu.edu). If I can provide or assist with any accommodations related specifically to this course, let me know. I would be glad to help.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is complicated. Here’s the academic integrity statement from MTSU’s Lower Division office (since this is an upper-division course, the statement doesn’t necessarily apply):

“Learning to use source material responsibly will be a focus of this class. In your compositions and presentations, you must give credit for text, ideas, and images that did not originate with you. Your handbook distinguishes between unintentional and intentional plagiarism. Unintentionally failing to attribute researched material, or misuse of sources, is a ‘teaching moment’; intentional plagiarism—such as downloading a paper, having someone else write your essay, or cutting-and-pasting with no acknowledgement of the source—is a form of academic misconduct.

“I am required to report all instances of academic misconduct to the Provost’s Office. See the MTSU student handbook for an explanation as well as the possible consequences of engaging in academic misconduct. In this class, sanctions range from a mandatory rewrite for partial credit to an F in the course. The Provost’s Office may impose additional sanctions such as probation or suspension. To avoid such penalties, always do your own work, and ask for help when you are using source material. You can get help in class, during my office hours, at the University Writing Center, from a librarian, or online at Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL).”

Now here’s a strange thing: I copied and pasted that statement from somewhere else. It’s not plagiarism because I told you where it’s from (even though the statement uses the word “I,” which would suggest that I wrote it myself if it weren’t for the fact that I told you I didn’t). Later in the semester, one of your assigned style exercises will require you to imitate the words of another writer.

All that to say: plagiarism is complicated. Given that you are in a 4000-level course, you’ve probably heard a lot of speeches about plagiarism already. But because a few of the assignments in this course (including the final project) will let you flirt with the line between plagiarizing other people’s words and paying tribute to other people’s style, here are a couple tips: (1) If you think that you might be using another person’s words or ideas without giving enough credit to that person, talk to me about it before the assignment is due. There is no penalty for asking in advance whether or not you’re plagiarizing. (2) If it’s the night before a deadline and you have no idea what to write, don’t panic and just copy and paste someone else’s words. It’s better to turn in nothing than to turn in something plagiarized, though neither is a good option. Better to talk with me a week before the deadline so that the moment of panic never arrives.

I won’t give credit for intentionally plagiarized papers. I reserve the right to offer a chance to redo an assignment if I determine plagiarism wasn’t intentional.

**University Writing Center**

The University Writing Center is in room 362 of the James E. Walker Library and on the web at [www.mtsu.edu/uwc](http://www.mtsu.edu/uwc). The UWC offers students valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing. You can make an appointment for a conference by calling (615) 904-8237. Online writing assistance is also available. Visit the UWC website for hours and more information.

**Inclement Weather**

MTSU doesn’t usually close because of inclement weather, but students are allowed to use their own discretion when snow and icy conditions exist and will be given the opportunity to make up missed classes should they decide not to attend. To determine if classes are cancelled, listen to area radio and television stations or visit <http://www.mtsunews.com/weather/>.

**Email**

MTMail will be the official way that I pass on information about this course. Because of educational privacy laws, I will not use your personal email accounts. I won’t send you email every day, but check your MTMail daily to make sure you don’t miss important updates from the university, me, or your other teachers. I do not check D2L email regularly, so don’t plan on contacting me that way. You can find more information on MTMail here: <http://mtsu.edu/email/index.php>.

**Lottery Statement**

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you will not be able to regain eligibility at a later time.

**Course Calendar**

This version of the syllabus calendar includes reading and writing assignments for the first few weeks of class as well as deadlines for major assignments. I will provide a more detailed version of this calendar by the end of the second week of classes. Assigned readings are italicized, while writing assignments are italicized and in bold. Both kinds of assignments are due the day they are listed on the calendar. “D2L” means the reading is available as a PDF on the course website. “RR” means there’s a reading reflection for that day. You must complete at least 10 of 13 possible reflections. You are required to bring copies of those readings to class. I’m fine with you bringing an electronic or printed version as long as you’re able to mark it up.

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| Week 1 | Jan. 18 | Introduction to the Course |
| Unit 1: Linguistic Style | | |
| Week 2 | Jan. 23 | Introduction to the Learning Record  *Other People’s English, Chapters 1 & 2 (D2L)*  *Latino USA, Palabras:* [*http://latinousa.org/2015/05/08/spanglish-ilan-stavans/*](http://latinousa.org/2015/05/08/spanglish-ilan-stavans/) (RR) |
| Jan. 25 | **Style Exercise 1** |
| Week 3 | Jan. 30 | **Reflection** |
| Feb. 1 | *Steven Pinker, Prologue to* The Sense of Style *(D2L)*  *Nathan Heller, “Steven Pinker’s Bad Grammar”:* [*http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/steven-pinkers-bad-grammar*](http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/steven-pinkers-bad-grammar)  *Katy Steinmetz, “This Pronoun Is The Word of the Year for 2015”:* [*http://time.com/4173992/word-of-the-year-2015-they/*](http://time.com/4173992/word-of-the-year-2015-they/) (RR) |
| Week 4 | Feb. 6 | *David Foster Wallace, “Tense Present” (D2L)* (RR) |
| Feb. 8 | *Gloria Anzaldúa (D2L)* (RR)  Prompts for Analyzing Style and Performing Style |
| Week 5 | Feb. 13 | *Ted Chiang, “Story of Your Life”* (RR) |
| Feb. 15 | *Performing Prose, Chapter 1 & 2* (RR) |
| Unit 2: Rhetorical Style | | |
| Week 6 | Feb. 20 | *Performing Prose, Chapter 3* (RR)  **Style Exercise 2** |
| Feb. 22 | *Performing Prose, Chapter 5* (RR) |
| Week 7 | Feb. 27 | *Performing Prose, Chapter 6* (RR) |
| Mar. 1 | Prep for Midterm Self-Evaluation  **Midterm Self-Evaluation (due Fri., Mar. 3)** |
| Week 8 | Mar. 6 | Spring Break |
| Mar. 8 |
| Week 9 | Mar. 13 | *Performing Prose, Chapter 7* (RR)  **Style Exercise 3** |
| Mar. 15 | **Analyzing Style (First Draft)** |

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| Unit 3: Digital Style | | |
| Week 10 | Mar. 20 | *Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Massage* (RR) |
| Mar. 22 | *Whitney Phillips, “Internet Troll Sub-Culture’s Savage Spoofing of Mainstream Media”:*  [*https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/internet-troll-sub-culture-s-savage-spoofing-of-mainstream-media-excerpt/*](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/internet-troll-sub-culture-s-savage-spoofing-of-mainstream-media-excerpt/) (RR) |
| Week 11 | Mar. 27 | **Analyzing Style (Second Draft)** |
| Mar. 29 | *“On Multimodal Composing”:*  [*http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.2/praxis/devoss-et-al/composing.html*](http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.2/praxis/devoss-et-al/composing.html)(RR) |
| Week 12 | Apr. 3 | Individual Conferences (no full-class meeting) |
| Apr. 5 | **Style Exercise 4** |
| Week 13 | Apr. 10 | Prep for Performing Style |
| Apr. 12 | **Performing Style (First Draft)** |
| Week 14 | Apr. 17 | TBD |
| Apr. 19 | **Style Exercise 5** |
| Week 15 | Apr. 24 | TBD |
| Apr. 26 | **Performing Style (Second Draft)**  Course Wrap-Up |
| Finals | Apr. 28 – May 4 | **Final Self-Evaluation** |