



ENGL 4605-001: Advanced Composition

Mon. & Wed., 2:20 – 3:45 p.m.

3 Credit Hours

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Eric Detweiler

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Office: Peck 376

Office Phone: 615-898-2585

Virtual Office Hours (via Zoom): 12:30 – 2 p.m. on Mon., 1 – 3 p.m. on Thurs., & by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Prerequisites and Co-requisites

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.

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.

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 writing and communication 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, and
5. create and reflect on your own stylistic habits and choices.

Topics Covered

In this course, we will cover style from a few key angles:

- Style and Language
- Style and Rhetoric
- Style and Technology

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks

The only required book for this course is *Performing Prose: The Study and Practice of Style in Composition* by Chris Holcomb and M. Jimmie Killingsworth. It's available for purchase through the MTSU bookstore—\$28.50 used, \$38 new. It is also available for download through a couple of Walker Library's digital databases, so you're welcome to use those versions if you prefer not to pay for a physical copy. All other course readings will be available as hyperlinks or PDFs through D2L.

Supplementary Materials

There are no other supplementary materials for this course.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Grading Procedure

This semester is going to be different from most semesters, and I know that will come with challenges. Because of that, I've tried to make the grading system for the course as straightforward as possible. Your grades on all individual assignments will be pass/fail. That means if you meet the requirements of the assignment, you'll get full credit for it. See the tables below for a breakdown of how coursework will correspond to different letter grades. This will be a little different from how grades work in most courses and may take a minute for you to wrap your head around. But my hope is that, in the end, it will make it simpler for you to succeed in the course and keep the focus on learning instead of hitting specific percentages with each assignment just so you can maintain the GPA you want. I will update the D2L gradebook regularly, so you can keep track of the work you've completed there.

Grading Scale

See the two tables below for specific details on how grades will be broken down in this course. More detailed guidelines for all of the assignments listed in the first table will be available in the Content section of our D2L course shell.

Here's a key thing to keep in mind with the second table: The percentage of work you've completed in the course does not correspond to the grading scales used in a lot of other MTSU courses. For example, in other courses, having an 85% often means you have a B. In this course, if the D2L gradebook shows you have an 85%, that means you've done 85% of the required work and currently have a C, not a B. Make sure you aren't accidentally assuming the usual MTSU scale applies in this course.

Assignment	Percentage of Grade
<i>Day-to-Day Work</i>	
Reading Notes (15 of 17 possible)	10%
Reading Discussions (12 of 17 possible)	10%
Peer Workshops (2)	10%
<i>Major Writing Projects</i>	
Style Exercises (5 total)	25% (5% apiece)
Analyzing Style (2 drafts required)	20%
Performing Style (2 drafts required)	20%
Reflection Letter	5%
Total	100%

Letter Grade	Criteria
A	At least 100% of required coursework completed.
B	90% – 99% of required coursework completed.
C	80% – 89% of coursework completed.
D	At least 70% of coursework completed
F	Less than 70% of coursework completed.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are given rarely and only in extenuating circumstances. Page 56 of the [MTSU Undergraduate Catalog](#) states: "The grade I indicates that the student has not completed all course requirements because of illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, especially those which occur toward the end of the term. Mere failure to make up work or turn in required work on time does not provide the basis for the grade of "I" unless extenuating circumstances

noted above are present for reasons acceptable to the instructor.” Please refer to the Undergraduate catalog for the complete Incomplete Grade Policy.

Feedback

- I will provide feedback on all your major writing projects via the D2L dropboxes where you submit those assignments. I will provide feedback no more than two weeks after you submit the assignment. In most cases, you will receive audio recording of my feedback. If there is any reason why audio feedback will not work or be accessible for you, please let me know and I’m happy to find a form of feedback that will.
- Major writing assignments must be submitted to the corresponding D2L dropbox and will not be accepted via email. If you ever have trouble getting a file uploaded to a D2L dropbox, please let me know and we can figure out a solution.
- All assignment deadlines are listed in the calendar in D2L.

Deadlines and Late Work

I have deadlines in my classes for three main reasons, which I think it’s worth taking a moment to explain as a way of helping you understand where I’m coming from as a teacher:

1. Because of my own limitations. If I have every student turning in every assignment at a different time, it gets easy for me to overlook things, which can delay my feedback and cause confusion for you all.
2. Because you all will be learning to write together. As much as we sometimes think of writing as a solitary activity (a lone author sitting in their room typing away at a novel or essay), learning to write is a deeply social experience. We’ll discuss this point in this course. But for now, it means you’ll be developing your writing in conversation with each other, and you’ll be providing each other feedback on what you’re writing. For that to work, you’ll need to be working on writing assignments at roughly the same time as your classmates.
3. Because the writing assignments in this class build on each other. That means you’ll apply things you learn from writing earlier assignments while you’re working on later assignments. If you try to do everything in the last few weeks of the semester, then you won’t be able to build on what you’ve already learned. It would be like trying to climb a ladder by immediately jumping to the highest step—a difficult if not impossible task.

So there will be deadlines in this class, which you’ll be able to see using the D2L calendar. I ask that you stick to those deadlines as much as possible. But because I know that personal emergencies and technological problems pop up, **I am more than willing to offer extensions as needed and will not penalize late work.** I just ask that, if you anticipate needing an extension on a major writing project or other day-to-day work, you email me in advance of the deadline so that I can plan accordingly. If you don’t provide me with advance notice, I may not be able to provide you with a way to make up the work.

PARTICIPATION

Course Ground Rules

The following are expected of all students in this course:

- learn how to navigate D2L, referring to the D2L resources within our course shell for help as needed;
- address technical problems as soon as possible (feel free to email me if you have a technical problem you aren't sure how to address on your own); and
- be respectful to your instructor and peers; refrain from derogatory statements.

Class Participation

Student participation is required in all aspects of the course. Here are the expectations:

- Log in to course a *minimum* of 3 times per week.
- Attend real-time course meetings and/or view recordings of them afterward.
- Communicate with other students during Zoom meetings, in D2L discussion boards, etc. on a regular basis.
- Keep track of the deadlines in the D2L calendar and let me know if you anticipate any problems meeting those deadlines.
- Use the FAQ discussion board when you have questions about course.
- Communicate with me via office hours, email, Zoom meetings, and/or discussion boards.
- Read or watch any announcements posted to the course home page.

Attendance and Real-Time Course Components

This is a remote course, which means that (unlike fully online courses) you are expected to be available for synchronous (real-time) meetings during the course's scheduled meeting times. We will be using Zoom for those meetings. You can find instructions for accessing those meetings in the "Welcome to ENGL 4605" news item on D2L and the "Zoom" tab. That news item will also include instructions for attending my office hours, which will take place in a different Zoom meeting room.

That said, I know that this semester is going to come with some major technological and scheduling challenges. Some students will discover their internet bandwidth isn't always sufficient to stream live video. Some will have computers crash in the middle of the semester. Some will get sick or have to care for family members who get sick in ways that interfere with their ability to attend synchronous course meetings. For that reason, I will be recording all our Zoom meetings so that any students who aren't able to attend can watch them after the fact. Specifically, here's how those meetings will go:

- **Mondays:** Every Monday from Jan. 25 – Apr. 28, we will have a roughly 85-minute meeting that will be fairly similar to a regular face-to-face course meeting. I will make relevant announcements and cover upcoming and ongoing assignments, introduce you to key concepts and skills relevant to the course, and facilitate discussions where you all will discuss course readings and the writing you're doing. I expect you to attend those meetings in person or, if you are unable to do so, watch the recording of the meeting later in the week. That said, I strongly, strongly encourage you to attend if you are able to do so. If you don't attend regularly, it will be much harder for you to succeed in the course. As with most skills, it's very hard to get better at writing without practicing it and discussing it with others. Imagine if you were trying to learn a musical instrument, but instead of practicing that instrument or taking lessons with an experienced player, you

just watched videos of other people taking lessons. You could do that for a very long time without getting much better.

- **Wednesdays:** On the first two Wednesdays of the semester (Jan. 27 and Feb. 3), we will have regular 85-minute Zoom meetings. After that, I will be dividing students into small workshop groups and meeting with one group each Wednesday. I'll post a schedule to D2L that will let you know which weeks your group needs to attend the Wednesday meeting. In these meetings, group members will discuss their writing projects with each other and with me. Be prepared for a full 85-minute meeting, though Wednesday Zooms may wrap early. We will also have a full-class Zoom meeting on Apr. 28, the last day of classes.

One last note: Because I will be recording Monday Zoom meetings and posting the recordings to our D2L shell, you are *not* required to have your video turned on in Zoom. I understand some students may not be comfortable having their faces or personal spaces recorded.

In short, here's the attendance policy for this course: you should (1) spend some time in the course shell at least 3 times a week, (2) attend your group's Wednesday meetings, and (3) attend Monday Zoom meetings or, at the very least, watch the recording of the meeting later in the week (D2L allows me to see which students have viewed each video). If you stop checking in 3 times a week or don't attend/watch Zoom meetings for more than two weeks in a row, or if several class assignment submissions are missing, your attendance will be reported as "no longer attending."

Academic Integrity/Misconduct

Please review MTSU's policy on [Academic Integrity and Misconduct](#).

When it comes to detecting and addressing plagiarism, I refuse to use Turnitin because I have [major problems](#) with its business model and the assumption that students are guilty of plagiarism until proven innocent. I've been teaching for over a decade and am pretty good at noticing when a student is plagiarizing. If I do, I will almost always use it as an opportunity to start a one-on-one conversation about plagiarism rather than automatically failing the student or reporting them to university authorities. If you're ever concerned that you might be plagiarizing in a project you're working on (by not citing sources correctly, etc.), I encourage you to check in with me. I hope this is obvious, but I won't penalize you for accidentally plagiarizing in an early draft of a project that you share with me. If you submit a plagiarized assignment to one of the D2L dropboxes, you will have to redo it to get credit for the assignment. Resources on how to cite work correctly are available through the website of the [University Writing Center](#). You may read more about how to avoid plagiarism from the [Office of the University Provost](#).

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- submitting someone else's work (papers, themes, reports, drawings, laboratory notes, computer programs, etc.) as if it's your own;
- knowingly assisting another student in obtaining or using materials they attempt to pass off as their own work (this does *not* include collaborating with each other while you're working on a writing project, which I encourage you to do);

- submitting assignments previously used in other courses where you received credit for the work (in other words, you can plagiarize yourself); and
- improperly crediting or not crediting another author's work.

Ultimately, the consequences for plagiarism are my call. If you repeatedly and intentionally plagiarize assignments in this course, possible disciplinary sanctions (including expulsion from the university) may be imposed through the regular institutional procedures for addressing academic misconduct. I have the option of not giving you credit for plagiarized assignments until they're redone or of giving you an F for the course. Students guilty of plagiarism may be reported to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Email

If you need to get in touch with me outside of office hours, my MTMail address is the best way to do so: eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu. In most cases, I'll reply to any email I receive before 5 p.m. on a weekday by the end of that day. If it's during the workweek and you email me after 5, I usually reply the next day. If you email me during the weekend, don't expect to hear from me till the following Monday. If you have a pressing question or concern and the weekend is coming up, make sure to email me before 5 p.m. on Friday.

Per the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), all communication related to your grade will happen inside D2L. While I do not typically use my D2L email account, if you ask me a grade-related question via MTMail, I may suggest we continue the conversation using D2L email because it provides a little more privacy. While we're on the topic of FERPA: I cannot and will not communicate with your parents, guardians, or others about your grades or how you're doing in the course. That's because of the privacy protections FERPA grants you as a college student. If there is a parent, guardian, or other person you want to grant access to your grades and other educational records, they will need to register through the [Partners in Education program](#). Once they are enrolled in that program, they can request relevant records through the MT One Stop.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Technical Support

[D2L Resources](#) are available to MTSU Online Students. You can also find some links about D2L and online courses in the Getting Started module. Keep in mind that, as a "remote" course, our class is a little different from an "online" course (the real-time Zoom meetings are the main difference).

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 and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or [DAC Email](#).

I know that the remote nature of this course as well as the mental and emotional stress of COVID-19 may present additional accessibility challenges that extend beyond what is officially

on file with the DAC. If I can assist with any additional accommodations or accessibility needs, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I'm happy to help.

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center is a great resource for both remote and on-campus students. Its physical location is room 362 of the James E. Walker Library, and it's online at www.mtsu.edu/uwc. The UWC offers students valuable one-on-one assistance with their writing, and they offer virtual appointments. You can make an appointment for a conference using their website or by calling (615) 904-8237. Whether you feel like you're the best or the worst writer in the class, the UWC is a wonderful resource.

Title IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against or been the victim of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking should contact a Title IX/Deputy Coordinator at 615-898- 2185 or 615-898-2750 for assistance or review [MTSU's Title IX website](#) for resources.

MTSU faculty are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are legally obligated to share reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking with the University's Title IX coordinator to help ensure student's safety and welfare. Please refer to [MTSU's Title IX website](#) or contact information and details.

Tutoring

MTSU Online supports multiple [Online Student Services](#).

Grade Appeals

[University Policy 313, Student Grade Appeals](#), provides an avenue for MTSU students to appeal a final course grade in cases in which the student alleges that unethical or unprofessional actions by the instructor and/or grading inequities improperly impacted the final grade.

Hope (Lottery) Scholarship Information

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 may not be able to regain eligibility at a later time.

For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your [Lottery Statement of Understanding form](#) or contact your [MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor](#).

True Blue Pledge

As a member of this diverse community, I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success. I am engaged in the life of this community. I am a recipient and a giver. I am a listener and a speaker. I am honest in word and deed. I am committed to reason, not violence. I am a learner now and forever. I am a BLUE RAIDER. True Blue!

Course Calendar

The following schedule lists the deadlines for readings and course assignments. Reading assignments are in *italics* and writing assignments are in **bold**. All readings and assignments are due the day they're listed in the calendar below. See the D2L course calendar, as well as the dropboxes and discussion boards, for the specific time at which a given assignment is due.

I will do my best to keep us in line with this schedule throughout the semester. However, I reserve the right to make changes as needed (in the event of things like natural disasters, personal health issues, etc.). If I ever do make changes to this calendar, I will announce them via a news item on our D2L homepage and update due dates across D2L. If you ever see any discrepancies between this calendar and a deadline listed somewhere else in D2L, please let me know and I'll address it ASAP.

All readings can be found in the Content section of our course's D2L shell as PDFs or links.

Week 1	
Jan. 25	Introductions, Overview of Syllabus, and Discussion of How this Course Will Work
Jan. 27	Discuss Prompt for Style Exercise 1 <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Steven Pinker – The Sense of Style, Prologue</i>• <i>Nathan Heller – "Steven Pinker's Bad Grammar"</i>
Week 2	
Feb. 1	<i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Rusty Barrett – Other People's English, Ch. 1</i>
Feb. 3	Style Exercise 1
Week 3	
Feb. 8	Discuss Prompts for Analyzing Style and Performing Style <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Alix Spiegel, "A Man Finds an Explosive Emotion Locked in A Word"</i>• <i>Ted Chiang, "Story of Your Life"</i>
Feb. 10	Workshop Group Meeting <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Performing Prose, Ch. 1</i>
Week 4	
Feb. 15	Discuss Prompt for Style Exercise 2 <i>Reading:</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 2</i>
Feb. 17	Workshop Group Meeting <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 8</i>
Week 5	
Feb. 22	<i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gloria Anzaldúa, "Entering into the Serpent" and "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (both are in the same PDF on D2L)
Feb. 24	Workshop Group Meeting <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 3</i>
Week 6	
Mar. 1	Discuss Prompt for Style Exercise 3 Style Exercise 2
Mar. 3	Workshop Group Meeting <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 4</i>
Week 7	
Mar. 8	Discuss Prompt for Style Exercise 4 Style Exercise 3 <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 5</i>
Mar. 10	Workshop Group Meeting
Week 8	
Mar. 15	Peer Workshop Analyzing Style (First Draft)
Mar. 17	Individual Zoom Conferences (no Workshop Group Meeting)
Week 9	
Mar. 22	<i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Chs. 6 & 7</i>
Mar. 24	Workshop Group Meeting <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 9</i>
Week 10	

Mar. 29	<i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing Prose, <i>Ch. 10</i>
Mar. 31	<i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBC Radio, "Languaging IRL: BuzzFeed's Guide to Grammar in the Internet Age" (this is a radio piece, so listen instead of/in addition to reading) Emmy Favilla, "BuzzFeed Style Guide" (just browse for a few minutes—no need to read this top to bottom) <p>Analyzing Style (Second Draft, due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday)</p>
Week 11	
Apr. 5	<p>Discuss Prompt for Style Exercise 5</p> <p>Style Exercise 4</p>
Apr. 7	<p>Workshop Group Meeting</p> <p><i>Reading</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Brooks, "FML"
Week 12	
Apr. 12	<p>Peer Workshop</p> <p>Performing Style (First Draft)</p>
Apr. 14	<p>Workshop Group Meeting</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashley Feinberg, "This is the Daily Stormer's Playbook" (a warning that this reading is about the style guide of a neo-Nazi website and includes screenshots from that guide with intensely racist, sexist, and antisemitic language)
Week 13	
Apr. 19	<p>Discuss Prompt for Reflection Letter</p> <p>Style Exercise 5</p>
Apr. 21	<p>Workshop Group Meeting</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allyson Waller, "Black, Deaf, and Extremely Online"
Week 14	
Apr. 26	Final Q&A about Performing Style
Apr. 28	<p>Full-Class Zoom Meeting Reflecting on Final Projects</p> <p>Performing Style (Second Draft)</p>
Finals	

May 6	Reflection Letter (due by 11:59 p.m. CST)
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