



ENGL 4670-003 (CRN: 15318)

Special Topics in Writing: Digital Writing

PH 325 | MW 12:40–2:05 p.m. | 3 credits

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Eric Detweiler

Email Address: eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu

Office: Peck 376, but in the process of moving to 323A

Office Phone: 615-898-2585

Office Hours (USE THEM! PLEASE!): 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. on Mon. (in person), 2 – 4 p.m. on Thurs. (via Zoom), and by appointment (in person or Zoom)

- Details for Zoom Office Hours
 - Link:
<https://mtsu.zoom.us/j/6811476561?pwd=ZE9mSzNUWklOWng5T0F3UkpGc2ZjQT09>
 - Meeting ID: 681 147 6561
 - Passcode: 678935

COURSE INFORMATION

Prerequisites and Co-requisites

Completion of 1000- and 2000-level English requirements with a grade of C- or better.

Description

An overview of the theoretical and practical work involved in creating, editing, and publishing writing using digital platforms. Coursework will emphasize the production of digital writing projects, with students collaboratively navigating digital publishing workflows from first drafts through actual digital publication. Students will learn how digital technologies are affecting the ways people write in public and professional contexts, including overlaps and divergences from analog writing platforms and genres.

One important note: This is the very first time this course is being offered at MTSU. Because of that, I'm approaching it in a more experimental way than I would an established course. I'll try to keep expectations clear and manageable, but some aspects of the course may be a little more open-ended and flexible than usual. I'll be looking for feedback from you all throughout the semester, so please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns, or points of interest! In many ways, we'll be inventing this course together.

Major in Public Writing and Rhetoric!

Interested in more courses like this one? In addition to being an elective for English majors and writing minors, this course is the introduction to MTSU's brand-new [Public Writing and Rhetoric](#) major. If you're interested in adding that major based on your experience in this course, let Dr. Detweiler know.

Objectives

The course is designed to teach students to

1. recognize and navigate the rhetorical, ethical, and aesthetic complexities involved in digital writing and publishing;
2. understand how writing circulates in digital spaces;
3. make effective and ethical choices in selecting digital writing tools and approaches;
4. anticipate and respond to the needs and expectations of diverse digital audiences;
5. individually and collaboratively produce, edit, and publish writing in multiple genres using a variety of digital platforms; and
6. use digital platforms to publish their own personal, public, and professional writing projects in the future.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks

There are no assigned textbooks for this course. All course readings and other materials will be available as PDFs or links via D2L.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Grading Procedure

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 a set of basic requirements for an assignment, you'll get full credit for it. If you don't, you'll get no credit. See the tables below for a breakdown of coursework and how it will correspond to different letter grades. It's 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 actually learning to write 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'll be able to keep track of the work you've completed there.

I will provide more detailed prompts for all the assignments listed below as the semester unfolds.

Assignment	Percentage of Grade
<i>Recurring Work</i>	
<i>Posting:</i> You'll write and post short weekly pieces to a course site we'll discuss in the first few weeks of the semester.	20%
<i>Peer Feedback:</i> You'll provide feedback on classmates' major projects throughout the semester.	15%
<i>Major Projects</i>	
<i>How-To Guide:</i> Using Adobe InDesign, you'll create a how-to guide meant to introduce others to a digital writing tool of your choice.	20%
<i>Writing Digital Culture:</i> Using a digital platform, you'll write a longform piece about an aspect of digital culture.	20%
<i>Interactive Nonfiction:</i> Using a tool called Twine, you'll collaborate to create a piece of interactive nonfiction. We'll talk more about what that means as the project approaches.	25%
Total	100%

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

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
---	---	--

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.
- Most coursework will require you to upload something to a D2L dropbox, even if it's just a link to a digital project that lives elsewhere on the internet. If you ever have trouble getting something uploaded to a dropbox, just let me know.

- I will also provide short written feedback as needed on smaller course assignments. For instance, if you submit a post or piece of peer feedback that doesn't meet the requirements, I'll note that in the D2L dropbox.
- 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. That said, if something comes up that prevents you from turning something in on time—an illness, a technological issue, a family emergency—please let me know. I am often, though not always, willing to give extensions as needed. I just ask that, if you anticipate needing an extension on a major writing project or other recurring 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 coursework.

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 another person's work (papers, themes, reports, drawings, laboratory notes, computer programs, etc.) as if it's your own;
- turning in AI-generated work as 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.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

I ask that you miss no more than four class meetings. If you miss more than four, you **must** schedule a one-on-one meeting with me to develop a plan to make sure you can keep up with the course. If you don't schedule that meeting, you won't be able to pass the course.

Masks

A classroom like ours is an easy place for COVID and other respiratory illnesses to spread (the flu and RSV are also going around right now). For the sake of your health, my health, your classmates' health, and the health of at-risk people in our communities, I will be wearing a mask this semester unless these illnesses' prevalence drops significantly. I ask that you do the same, but cannot require it.

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 emails I receive during the workweek within 24 hours. I don't always check my email on the weekend, so if you have an urgent question and the weekend is approaching, email me by 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.

OTHER MTSU RESOURCES AND POLICIES

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 students may encounter accessibility needs and challenges that extend beyond what is officially on file with the DAC. If I can assist with any additional accessibility issues, 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 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.

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](#).

Course Calendar

The following schedule lists the deadlines for readings and drafts of major course projects. Major project deadlines are in **bold**. Both readings and projects are due by the start of class on the day they're due unless otherwise noted. Some days also include a brief overview of the topic we'll be covering that day or other things we'll be doing.

One big catch: As you'll probably notice, the second half of this course calendar (after spring break) is fairly open. Major project deadlines are listed, but some of the smaller day-to-day stuff isn't. I'll post an updated version of this calendar will all that filled in once class gets rolling and I have a better sense of how you all are responding to the first half of the course and what you'd like to get out the second half.

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 inclement weather, personal health issues, etc.). If I ever do make changes to this calendar, I will announce them in class and via a news item on our D2L homepage. 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 will be available in the Content section of our course's D2L shell as PDFs or links.

<i>Date</i>	<i>What We're Up To</i>
Week 1	
Jan. 18	Introductions, Syllabus and Course Calendar
Week 2	
Jan. 23	Read and Discuss Prompt for Posting Get Set Up with Course Site Discussion: What Is Digital Writing?
Jan. 25	Read and Discuss Prompt for How-To Guide (First Major Project) Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jim Ridolfo and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, "Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery"• John Gallagher, Introduction to <i>Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing</i>
Week 3	
Jan. 30	Artificial Intelligence and Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stephen Marche, "The College Essay Is Dead"• S. Scott Graham, "AI-Generated Essays Are Nothing to Worry About"• Abeba Birhane, "ChatGPT, Galatica, and the Progress Trap"

Feb. 1	Experiment with Lex and ChatGPT
Week 4	
Feb. 6	<p>Digital Platforms and Genres: Possibilities and Problems</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Gallagher, "Template Rhetoric" from <i>Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing</i> Bobby Allyn, "Here are 4 Key Points from Facebook Whistleblower's Testimony on Capitol Hill" <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>, "Teen Mental Health Deep Dive" Simon Hill, "How to Spot Fake Reviews on Amazon"
Feb. 8	<p>Experiment with InDesign</p> <p>Required Tutorial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kladi Vergine, "InDesign Quick Start 2021" (we'll talk more about accessing/working through this video tutorial on 2/6)
Week 5	
Feb. 13	<p>First Draft of How-To Guide</p> <p>Peer Workshop</p>
Feb. 15	<p>Keep Experimenting with InDesign</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Anderson and Jentery Sayers, "The Metaphor and Materiality of Layers"
Week 6	
Feb. 20	<p>Digital Lo-Fi</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monica Chin, "File Not Found" Karl Stolley, "The Lo-Fi Manifesto" Adam Hammond, "A Total Beginner's Guide to Twine 2.1"
Feb. 22	<p>Experiment with HTML</p> <p>Required Tutorial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jen Simmons, "HTML Essential Training" (complete the introduction through section 4)
Week 7	
Feb. 27	<p>Revised Draft of How-To Guide</p> <p>Read and Discuss Prompts for Writing Digital Culture (Second Major Project) and Interactive Nonfiction (Third Major Project)</p>

Mar. 1	Experiment with HTML + Twine Required Tutorial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jen Simmons, "HTML Essential Training" (complete sections 5 through 9)
MAR. 6 – 11: SPRING BREAK	
Week 8	
Mar. 13	TBD
Mar. 15	Experiment with CSS (specific supplemental resources TBD)
Week 9	
Mar. 20	TBD
Mar. 22	Experiment with Digital Audio (specific supplemental resources TBD)
Week 10	
Mar. 27	First Draft of Writing Digital Culture Peer Workshop
Mar. 29	Experiment with JavaScript (specific supplemental resources TBD)
Week 11	
Apr. 3	TBD
Apr. 5	Keep Experimenting with JavaScript (specific supplemental resources TBD)
Week 12	
Apr. 10	Revised Draft of Writing Digital Culture
Apr. 12	Mash It All Together: Experiment with Twine + HTML, CSS, and JavaScript
Week 13	
Apr. 17	TBD
Apr. 19	Work on Interactive Nonfiction in Class
Week 14	
Apr. 24	First Draft of Interactive Nonfiction Peer Workshop
Apr. 26	Debrief on Class
Finals	
Apr. 28 – May 4	Revised Draft of Interactive Nonfiction (due by 12:30 p.m. on May 1, the start of our final exam period) Final Draft of Interactive Nonfiction (due by 11:59 p.m. on May 5)