



**English 502**

**FALL 2025**

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Instructor: Dr. Shannon Carter

Office Location: Talbot Hall, 214

Office Hours: via Zoom

University Email Address: Shannon.Carter@tamuc.edu

Office Fax: 903-886-5980

**Course Materials**

- Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way*. Souvenir Press. ANY EDITION! *This has been out since the 1990s, and you can find cheap copies at most any used book store.*
  
- Calarco, Jessica McCrory. *A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum*. Princeton University Press, 2020
  
- Castillo, Elaine. *How to Read Now: Essays*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2022.

- Krouse, Tonya and Tamara F. O'Callaghan. *Introducing English Studies: An A-Z Guide*. Routledge, 2020.

**Course description:**

Three semester hours. Primarily for English MA/MS students, English 502 is an introduction to graduate studies in English including histories, challenges, and debates in English studies. This course is required of all students in the Masters program and should be taken within the students first year. Graded on a satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U) basis.

**Introduction:**

Welcome! This course serves as a general introduction to graduate school in general and English studies in particular. Consider this a hands-on, semester long orientation to our program and ways to effectively navigate your coursework over the next couple of years. By "effectively navigate," I mean both in terms of required courses and coursework AND, more importantly, your own personal and professional needs as they relate to your personal and professional goals. You define what success in this program means for you, and we'll talk about how to help you meet that mark. Studies will develop a flexible and generative understanding of the diverse fields that characterizes English studies, especially with respect to those areas of specialization offered in our program (e.g., rhetoric and composition, literary studies)

Includes study of the profession and the historical development of English studies, especially with respect to the wide range English studies encompass and the specific ways you can take up these different paths in our particular program (e.g., rhetoric and composition, literary studies).

Over the course of the semester, students will be invited to take up questions like the following: How have theorists and scholars defined English studies? What does/can graduate study in these areas do and to what end? What does it look like? What might you expect in the graduate seminars we offer? How might you effectively prepare to take on/up the expectations in ways that both support your own goals and your definition of success? What "counts" as scholarship in this complex field? How might graduate study in English Studies, rhetoric and composition, and literary studies take up topics and questions you might wish to purpose at some point in your program? How might this all serve your central goals for pursuing an advanced degree in the field?

Topics may include the following:

- Degree Planning, including the available areas of emphasis (rhetoric and composition, literary studies) AND the third option: a general program of study in English studies more broadly.
- Comprehensive exams
- final phase of your program: thesis (518) versus the Master's Portfolio? What's the best option for you?
- Imposter syndrome! Are you feeling like you don't belong here? First, you *do* belong because you're *here*! Second, you are absolutely not alone, even though you may feel as though you're the only one. Frankly, I'm still regularly fighting that imposter syndrome myself!
- Work/life/school balance: As this is a hands-on, workshop designed to help you succeed in this program, you'll be asked to share your experiences and advice and answer one another's questions. For example, we do not have any human children, so I'll ask those who are parents or guardians to
- Additional topics: what do you want/need to discuss/explore together? Let me know and we'll build it into the schedule

## **Course Description**

**Student Learning Outcomes** (Should be measurable; observable; use action verbs)

1. Define, identify, and explain what English studies is and does, both in general and in rhetoric and composition and literary studies.
2. Summarize the historical and recent developments in the field and consider how this information might serve their proposed program of study.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the formal requirements and procedures involved in successfully completing the program.

Major assignments: Weekly discussions, short reading and writing assignments related to the above objectives

Culminating project for the course: develop a “personal study program” designed to help guide you through this degree in ways that best align with your goals for this program, developing academic and teaching interests in the field. Students should also consider topics that might have more to do with work-life balance, though you needn't include this in your final assignment unless you wish to share that information in this document.

## **COURSE ASSESSMENT**

*As an instructor, my approach to this course is via a “labor-based model.” Here’s how Traci Gardner describes this approach in “When Your Grades are Based on Labor” (<https://tracigardner.com/labor/index.php>):*

*Grades in this course are based on your labor—on the time and intensity that you put into your writing. You are not punished for making mistakes as long as you work to improve throughout the term.*

*To help explain what this means, she offers the following infographic, which I find communicates this approach more clearly than most anything I’ve encountered on the subject. We will, of course, discuss this approach on the regular throughout the course, but to get us started in this important document, the syllabus:*

# When Your Grades Are Based on Labor

Read more at [tracigardner.com/labor](http://tracigardner.com/labor)



Your grades are based on your labor—on the time and intensity you put into your writing. Here's how to approach your projects.



## Focus on Ideas

Focus on your ideas, on what you're trying to say. Forget about the pressure to be perfect. Focusing on perfection can distract writers from developing their ideas. Because you are graded on labor, mistakes won't undermine your grade.



## Write for Yourself

You're studying the kinds of writing that are important in your field and developing a sense of what makes that writing effective. Don't worry about impressing me. Write what will make you successful in the workplace.



## Take Risks

Try kinds of writing that stretch your abilities and help you learn new things. There's no need to play it safe. After all, the safe, easy route doesn't push you improve your writing.



## Have a Do-Over

If you take a risk and it doesn't turn out, you can always try again. Just as in a game, you have unlimited do-overs. Making mistakes is part of the learning process. As long as you are trying to improve your work, you can't fail.



## Put In the Effort

You will write, rewrite, start over, and try again. All this work counts, as long as you listen to feedback, incorporate what you hear, and reflect on how to improve.

Credits: Infographic was created on canva.com. Icons are all from The Noun Project, used under a CC-BY 3.0 license: report by Lil Squid, Fluorescent Light Bulb by Matt Brooks, analytics by Wilson Joseph, aim by Gilbert Bages, Switch Controller by Daniel, and Gym by Sathish Selladurai.

Grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

Grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- FC: full credit (direct, rich, and full engagement with the prompt, the readings, and classmates)

- PC: partial credit (much less direct, richness, and nuance in response to prompt and readings and classmates, but still on topic)
- NC: no credit (didn't submit on time or submission off topic)

## **LMS**

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

## **ACCESS AND NAVIGATION**

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

## **Course Specific Procedures/Policies**

### **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

If you email me Monday-Friday, expect a 24–48-hour response. If I do not respond within that time, feel free to send up a follow email...seriously! Please do! I get a LOT of emails and sometimes one might get lost in the shuffle, or I simply might not have received it. **Never feel bad about follow-ups.** If you email me after 5pm on a Friday, though, you will most likely not get a response until Monday at the earliest. I like my weekends, just like you. You are welcome to email me nonetheless, just please be aware the response will not be as quick as an email sent during the week. Also, you are welcome to come to my office.

### **Communication**

Communication is SO important in this course! If you communicate with me, I can and will do whatever I can to best help you. However, if you do not communicate with me, I cannot even begin to know what you need or how I can help. Communication is key. You can email me, talk with me before or after class, or come by during my office hours. I am here however you need, but help me help you by utilizing communication.

### **Attendance**

*Since this is an online class, your attendance will be determined by your active participation in the forums and other activities, as well as the amount of time you have spent in the course. It is important for you to regularly check in to avoid falling behind.*

*Please do not disappear without any communication. Firstly, we will worry about you. Additionally, if I am unaware of your situation, I won't be able to collaborate with you to find a possible path towards successfully completing this course. We understand that sometimes life can make it difficult to reach out and inform your instructors about what's*

*going on. That is understandable, as we are all human beings first. If you find yourself overwhelmed and unable to cope, there is no shame in deciding that this might not be the right semester to take on this class.*

## **Grievance Procedure**

Students who have concerns regarding their courses should first address those concerns with the assigned instructor in order to reach a resolution. Students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not been able to meet individually with their instructor, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another communication medium, should then schedule an appointment with **Dr. Hunter Hayes, Chair of the Department of Literature and Languages** ([hunter.hayes@tamuc.edu](mailto:hunter.hayes@tamuc.edu)). Where applicable, students should also consult University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 (“Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation”).

## **Syllabus Change Policy**

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance and will be to the students’ benefit.

## **Academic Honesty/Plagiarism:**

The official departmental policy: “Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b [1,2,3])

If you ever have any questions about a particular use of a source, always ask your instructor (me). They (I) want you to avoid plagiarism, too, so they (I) will help you do so whenever and wherever they (I) can. Do what you can to take advantage of this support – to look innocent in addition to being innocent when it comes to charges of plagiarism.

Students guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism can expect to fail the assignment in question or the entire course depending on the nature of the incident.

## **University Specific Procedures**

### **Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

### **Nondiscrimination Notice**

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

### **Attendance**

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

## **AI Use in Courses**

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

## **Academic Integrity**

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

## **Collection of Data for Measuring Institutional Effectiveness**

To measure the level of compliance with the university's Institutional Effectiveness guidelines, throughout the semester, I will collect some of the ungraded texts you produce. The texts will be part of a portfolio created on your behalf and will be measured to ensure that our program "promotes practices that result in higher student academic achievement; an enhanced student experience; aligned and transparent decisions; and readily available information for improvement, accountability, and accreditation" (see

“Department of Institutional Effectiveness,”

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutus/institutionalEffectiveness/default.aspx>). This is solely an assessment of program effectiveness and in no way affects students’ course grades or GPAs.

## **Students with Disabilities -- ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

### **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

## **Campus Concealed Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified

law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

## **RESOURCES**

### **A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health**

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.tamuc.edu/counsel](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

### **Writing Center**

The Writing Center offers writers free, one-on-one assistance. We welcome all writers, majors, and disciplines—undergraduate and graduate students alike. In fact, we work from the premise that all writers, no matter their ability level, benefit from the feedback of

knowledgeable readers. The Writing Center staff is trained to provide writers with just this service. In short, we are here to help you help yourself. The Writing Center offers one-on-one sessions with writers—both face-to-face and online—begin on the hour and last up to 45 minutes. You cannot sign up for back-to-back appointments, but you may sign up for as many appointments as you'd like each day and week. For more information, visit <https://www.tamuc.edu/writing-center>

## Library

The Velma Waters Library supports the research, learning and teaching interests of students, faculty and staff. Connect with a librarian, explore our research and course guides, and attend workshops.

- **Chat with a Librarian!** Get immediate assistance with our [chat service](#) on the main Library page: <https://www.tamuc.edu/library/>
- **Email** [ask@tamuc.libanswers.com](mailto:ask@tamuc.libanswers.com). We will respond to your email within 24 hours, often much sooner.
- **Text** your question to 903.225.2862.
- **Call** the Waters Library at 903.886.5718 or contact the librarian for your college/department to discuss your research needs.
- **Meet With Us!** Don't stay up all night searching Google. Schedule a one-on-one consultation held in-person or via Zoom with the librarian for your college/academic department.
- **Visit Us!** We'd love to meet you in-person!
  - Waters Library Research Office: Second Floor, Room 213
  - Waters Library University Archives: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 406A
  - A&M – Commerce at Mesquite Metroplex Center: Second Floor, Study Room

## Student Career Preparedness Office

Meet with career advisors who can help you with the resources and tools needed to prepare you for your next phase after graduation and beyond. To schedule an appointment, you can either call 903.468.3223, emailing [hirealion@tamuc.edu](mailto:hirealion@tamuc.edu) or go online by clicking [schedule an appointment](#).

## **Technical Support**

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

## **Calendar**

## **Readings**

This course is designed to introduce you to graduate-level study in English through four core texts:

- *How to Read Now* (HtRN)
- *The Artist's Way* (TAW)
- *A Field Guide to Graduate School: The Hidden Curriculum* (THC)
- *Introducing English Studies* (IES)

## **Assignments**

### **1. Discussion Boards**

Purpose:

To encourage reflective, critical engagement with readings and to build a collaborative learning community.

Expectations:

- Post one initial post to get the conversation going (approx. 300–400 words).
- Respond to at least two peers (100–200 words each).

Deadlines:

- Initial post due Wednesday, midnight, CST--to ensure your classmates have time to respond to your initial post
- Response due before midnight cst on Sunday

Grading: Labor-Based Model (see above)

- More specifically, concerns here with engagement with texts, reflections, and meaningful interaction with peers.

## **2. *The Artist's Way* Weekly Reflections**

Purpose: To cultivate creativity and reflective practice throughout the semester, tying the experience and insights to your academic journey now and going forward.

Expectations: Each week, you'll be expected to keep up with your Morning Pages. However, you do not need to share those with us. Those are for you. Instead, I'm asking you to reflect upon how those insights and reflections might serve your graduate journey. I will also ask you to complete at least **one** additional activity at the end of that week's chapter.

- Post a short reflection (200–300 words) connecting the exercise to your graduate journey.

## **3. Discussion Leader Activities (x2)**

Purpose: To develop presentation skills, deepen understanding of course texts, and foster collaborative learning.

Expectations:

- Each student will sign up to serve as discussion leader for TWO presentations: one chapter from IES and one from THC
- Offer a brief overview of the chapter and key ideas in an easily digestible modality of your choice (e.g., brief slideshow)
- Create 2-3 discussion questions designed to prompt discussion on the chapter.
- Respond to classmates to keep the conversation moving in generative ways.

#### **4. Final Project: Personal MA/MS Guidebook**

Purpose: To synthesize learning from the semester into a personalized plan for success in the MA/MS program.

Expectations: Make it meaningful to/for the future you! Get creative, but remember you're the primary audience for it. For example, you might consider designing it as a letter to your future self.

10–12 pages (double-spaced) OR a creative/digital equivalent.

Include the following information:

- Information about requirements for selected track (e.g., literature; rhetoric and composition; generalist track), drawing insights from the ongoing conversations surrounding the collection on *Introducing English Studies*
- Insights and guidance concerning relevant resources you might take advantage of and to what end (e.g., what's at the Graduate School website? how about the Writing Center? What about various resources for the Library? What else?)
- Insights and guidance drawn from the *Fieldguide to Graduate School: The Hidden Curriculum*.

- Insights and guidance drawn from your experiences throughout the semester on *The Artist's Way* (creativity in graduate school)
- Plans for degree completion (the culminating project): “To Thesis or Not to Thesis”: What is required as the culminating project for your MA/MS and which route will you go to get there? If 518 (thesis), what suggestions do you have for yourself for that path and why you might want to go there vs. 595. What does 595 require? what does it look like? What thoughts do you have for moving yourself this course through the program to reach that milestone successfully? [NOTE: We recommend 595 if you're shooting for a two-year program. Many universities are switching to this model, including Texas A&M College Station].

Must include: reflections on the four course texts, your degree plan pathway, survival strategies, and creative/professional goals.

Due Week 15

### **Week-by-Week Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

Introductions (Forum 1); TAW, Introduction and Week 1

Sign up for Discussion Leader activities (see “Assignments” above) from *Introducing English Studies* and *A Grad School Fieldguide: The Hidden Curriculum*.

survey link: <https://forms.gle/WQUywHGH9w3EtR4Z6>

#### **Week 2: Reading Critically for Graduate School**

HtRN (Forum 2); TAW, Week 2

#### **Week 3: Reading Critically for Graduate School (cont.)**

HtRN (Forum 3); TAW Week 3

#### **Week 4: Graduate School and “The Hidden Curriculum”**

THC Presentations | TAW Week 4

#### **Week 5: THC continued**

THC Presentations | TAW, Week 5

#### **Week 6: THC concludes**

THC Presentations | TAW Week 6

**Week 7: Your Personalized Program of Study**

This week, we'll introduce your final project and begin working it through

TAW 7; THC synthesis (Forum 4)

**Week 8: Introducing English Studies**

IES Presentations | TAW, Week 8

**Week 9: Introducing English Studies (cont.)**

IES Presentations | TAW, Week 9

**Week 10: Introducing English Studies (conclude)**

IES Presentations | TAW, Week 10

**Week 11:**

IES synthesis (Forum 5); TAW, Week 11

**Week 12-13: Work on Your Final Projects**

TAW, through the end

**Week 14: Final Projects, Peer Review**

**Week 15: Final Projects Due**