



English 615

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.

- Foss, Sonja. *Destination Dissertation: A Traveler's Guide to a Done Dissertation*. ANY EDITION!
- Krouse, Tonya and Tamara F. O'Callaghan. *Introducing English Studies: An A–Z Guide*. Routledge, 2020.

Introduction:

English 615 is an introduction to the profession of English—that is, the process by which one

becomes a professional. We will focus on issues related to a future career in higher education,

but we will include conversations about how you can put your PhD to work in non-academic

careers, as well. Some of the topics we address will be the structure and processes in our program, what research looks like in different fields of study, how to plan the stages of your education, how to write a proposal, the development of your CV , and how dissertations are structured—and, even more importantly, what kinds of research questions they address. Along

the way, a number of faculty members will meet with us to answer your questions about their

areas of study and provide additional guidance and mentoring. Most critically, this class is intended to serve you and address your needs—your questions and your concerns. There is no

question that is “too stupid” or too insignificant, and this is the place to ask!

Primarily for English doctoral students, English 615 is an introduction to the profession of English—that is, the process by which one becomes a professional. Issues covered will include

the curriculum vita, abstracts, dissertation proposals, dissertations, the job search, the research

process beyond graduate school. The course will also include history of English as a part of the

college curriculum. This course is required of all doctoral students. Graded on a satisfactory (S)

and unsatisfactory (U) basis.

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 pursue 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
- 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 traciagardner.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

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.

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 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). 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

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

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. 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: 4th 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 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.
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4. Midterm Project: Destination Dissertation Review (feeds into your final project)

Purpose

This assignment introduces you to Sonja Foss's *Destination Dissertation*, a book I hope you'll hold onto throughout your program through the dissertation phase of the process. As a dissertation director for more than 20 years, I have found it to be a vital resource for students. Instead of focusing on the entire book, we'll focus on the preproposal template. By analyzing and reviewing this text, you will learn the component parts of a dissertation, see how the authors recommend approaching each part, and reflect on how useful (or limited) you find this framework for your own doctoral work.

Task

- Read: Engage deeply with the preproposal template chapter and related sections of *Destination Dissertation*.
- Summarize: Identify and explain the major components Foss outlines (problem, significance, lit review, framework, methods, delimitations/limitations, etc.).
- Evaluate: Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the book's approach. Does the template feel practical for your field? Are there aspects you would adjust?
- Reflect: Write a section on how you might use (or adapt) this framework in your own PhD journey.

Deliverables

- A 5–7 page paper (or multimodal equivalent) that includes:
 - Overview of Foss's template
 - Analysis of how it clarifies dissertation writing

- Critique of its limits or blind spots
- Reflection on how you might use/adapt it

Evaluation Criteria (100 pts)

- Accuracy of summary (25 pts)
 - Depth of analysis (25 pts)
 - Critical insight/critique (25 pts)
-

5. Final Project: Personal Ph.D. 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.
- Deliverables: 10–12 pages (double-spaced) OR a creative/digital equivalent.

Include the following information:

- **Specialization:** Information about requirements for selected track (e.g., literature; rhetoric and composition), drawing insights from the ongoing conversations surrounding the collection on *Introducing English Studies*. Which track will you take and why? What draws you to rhetoric and composition or literature or other fields under the broader umbrella of “English Studies”? Which faculty members might you like to work with? What is their specialization? Have you reviewed their vita/CV? What's your relationship with them at this point?

- **Resources:** 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?)
- **The Hidden Curriculum:** Insights and guidance drawn from the *Fieldguide to Graduate School: The Hidden Curriculum*.
- **Creativity:** Insights and guidance drawn from your experiences throughout the semester on *The Artist's Way* (creativity in graduate school)
- **Backwards Calendar:** Plans for degree completion
- **The Dissertation:** A revised version of your midterm project review of Destination Dissertation

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*

survey link: <https://tinyurl.com/r43br9t5>

Week 2: Reading Critically for Graduate School

HtRN (Forum 2); TAW1, "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: Midterm Project: Destination Dissertation

Forum 4 (Destination Dissertation) | TAW Week 6

Week 7: Midterm Project due

TAW 7

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: The “Backwards Calendar”

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