

ENGL 5305: Graduate Research Project (spring 2025, online-asynchronous)

Link to my Zoom room: <https://tamusa.zoom.us/my/jackayres>

Link to my WebEx room: <https://tamusa.webex.com/meet/jackson.ayres>

Instructor: Dr. Jackson Ayres

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Office Hours: Mon, 1:00-2:00pm; Wed, 00-2:00pm; and f2f or virtual meetings by appointment

Course Description

This asynchronous online class is a faculty-led workshop course in which students produce, over the course of the semester, a Graduate Research Project (GRP). Completing and submitting your GRP is our primary goal. A GRP will extend a project begun in a previous course, most likely fulfilling the prospectus drafted in ENGL 5304: Graduate Portfolio. A GRP can take the form of a scholarly article, a technical document, a lesson plan, a creative piece, a multimedia project, among other options. Finishing your GRP will entail setting and achieving weekly goals; workshopping drafts with peers; engaging in substantive editing, copyediting, and proofreading; reading and discussing relevant theories of knowledge-production and writing; and reflecting on your own writing processes and strategies. In sum, the class asks you to create an extended research-based scholarly project while also reflecting on practices of writing as well as producing knowledge and disseminating it to audiences.

Asynchronous Format

Our online format will be asynchronous, which means that there will be no live virtual sessions. As you will see at the end of this document, we will follow a regular work schedule built around weeklong units. This consistent schedule includes specific readings and topics for each week. I intend to upload a video (approx. 20-30 minutes) at the start of each week to introduce material and set goals. At times, I will post a second video later in the week to add or clarify information and to respond to questions.

While you will work autonomously, I encourage you to visit our Blackboard page regularly throughout the week. Furthermore, despite our asynchronous modality, please note that I am available for in-person meetings during my regularly scheduled office hours or a scheduled conference appointment.

The Ungraded Classroom

This class is ungraded, so it relocates the focus and purpose of the classroom onto *learning*, not ranking.

Students sometimes feel uncertainty or resistance to ungrading. A common reaction is a sense that the instructor is abdicating a responsibility. If there is no grading, how will students receive guidance and track progress? Rest assured that while there are no *grades*, we still have *assessment* in forms of feedback, and review – but, I am detaching these assessment activities from grading, a move that prevents a grade from overshadowing or distorting assessment, feedback, and review. Ungrading also accommodates a customizable educational experience, as you create your own individualized learning plan and proceed through the course in a way that makes it most meaningful to you and your goals.

Of course, the requirements of the university mean that I must submit a final grade. In the end, then, you do in fact receive a grade. However, you and I will collaborate to determine, in a qualitative and holistic way, your course grade. Throughout the semester, we will reflect on your work, process, and learning goals. Your final reflective self-assessment asks you to decide your grade for the course. I will

respond, and, in turn, you will either revise your grade or stick with it. This process has some caveats, identified later in this document, and I do retain a right to override; yet, I trust your judgment so I will only override a grade decision in select, rare circumstances – and it will not always be to lower a grade.

Instructor-identified Learning Goals

1. Refine and extend an understanding of writing as a process;
2. Gain knowledge about research and scholarly epistemologies;
3. Construct a digital portfolio and extended piece of scholarly expertise;
4. Reflect on how knowledge and expertise connects to personal and professional goals.

In addition to these goals, each student will develop, with me, their own personal learning goals. Students can periodically adjust their goals throughout the semester, based on experience and need.

Assignments

We have three categories of assignments: 1) engagement, 2) checkpoint, and 3) depth assignments. For your Engagement and Depth Assignments, all required criteria appears in the Course Schedule at the end of this document. Detailed Checkpoint Assignment handouts appear in our Blackboard page.

Engagement Assignments

- Blackboard discussion board posts
- Depth assignment drafts

Engagement assignments may seem routine, but they cannot be undervalued: these consistent, short or brief assignments are the essential building blocks of your learning. Discussion board posts ask you to plan your project, set goals and targets, organize your process, and hold yourself accountable. Depth assignment drafts scaffold the completion of larger projects and are therefore essential to success.

Impact on final self-assessment: you must identify, in your Checkpoint reflective writings, the Engagement Assignments you completed and how they supported your learning during the semester.

Checkpoint Assignments

- Learning plan
- Process letters (2)
- Mid-Semester Reflection
- Final self-assessment

Checkpoint assignments undergird the ungraded pedagogical approach and structure your ongoing learning experience. The learning plan establishes your goals for the semester. Intermittent process letters ask you to describe and meta-cognitively comment upon your learning methods and progress. A self-assessment at the end of term has you narrate and evaluate your learning experience and course performance; as part of this task, you will identify your course grade and then consult me about it.

Impact on final self-assessment: completing fewer than half the required checkpoint assignments automatically limits the highest final grade that you can assign your performance by one letter-grade.

Depth Assignments

- Capstone Project Prospectus Reflection and Response
- Statement of Purpose and Critical Perspective
- Capstone Project
- Digital Platform / Portfolio

Depth assignments enable you to engage course material in sustained, focused, and substantive ways. These course content-based assignments grow out of our narrower Engagement assignments.

Impact on final self-assessment: your maximum possible final grade automatically reduces by one letter-grade for each uncompleted Depth Assignment; if you lack one, B is your highest possible grade.

How to Submit Your Work

Submit assignments electronically to Blackboard. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Blackboard system prior to submission / posting, and contact me if you have questions. Use MLA format.

Late Papers

I accept work after the recommended submission dates. In such cases, however, I may not have time to give full feedback, undermining ungraded benefits and outcomes. The Final Self-Assessment determining your grade, moreover, factors missed deadlines into a final grade. Please see the schedule for late submission cut-off dates. When appropriate, request an extension in advance.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

ENGL 5305 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center:

The Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can schedule appointments with the Center in JagWire under the student services tab. The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center can be reached by emailing wldcc@tamusa.edu. Students can also make appointments with the Writing, Language, and Digital Composing under the Student Services tab in JagWire.

JAGS

Additional academic skill resources can be found in The JAGS (Jaguar Academic Guides to Success) Program. JAGS offers academic skill building strategies and can assist you in developing an effective academic success plan. If you are interested in the JAGS program, please contact the Student Academic Success Center at (210) 784-1352.

Students with Disabilities

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 disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in room 210. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dsupport@tamusa.edu.

Counseling Resources:

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday – Friday. After-hours crisis support is available by calling 210-784-1331. Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (to the extent permitted by law), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Safer Spaces

We will work together to create a safer classroom for every student enrolled in this course. We will treat each other with common decency and respect. Derogatory or abusive comments made regarding race, class, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, size, appearance, age, religion, ethnicity, political orientation, or nationality are grounds for dismissal from the classroom community. Enthusiasm is encouraged; hostility is not. These rules apply to online interactions as well face-to-face ones. No trolling! If you experience any discomfort, please contact me and we will redress it.

Meeting Essential Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Student Misconduct

Appropriate conduct is essential to the effective functioning of the University. University policy defines unacceptable conduct, both academic and non-academic misconduct, and penalties for such behavior in [The Student Handbook](#) and The Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Rights and Responsibilities

As a member in an academic community, students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education, be mature, be self-directed and be able to manage their own affairs. Students who are unwilling to abide by these basic expectations will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Students are expected to share in the responsibility and authority with faculty and staff to challenge and make known acts that violate the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Code of Conduct. For more information please [this site](#), which includes information on policies for the use of AI tools. Students,

moreover, are expected to contend with the content of the course and the academic field from which that content emerges. Please refer to [the Student Handbook](#) for more information.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, [34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education \(DoE\) Title IV regulation](#), a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which includes class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving Federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have his/her aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may need to return a portion of his/her federal aid.

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at sahelp@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-4357.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Schedule

Unit 1: Getting Started

Week of January 20

Welcome video

Discussion board post introducing yourself due by 11:59pm on Friday, Jan 24

Week of January 27

Introductions to course and ungraded pedagogy

Learning Plan due by 11:59pm on Friday, Jan 31

Week of February 03

Reviewing your prospectus / preparations

Read *The Craft of Research*, part I, chapter 1: From Topics to Questions

Capstone Project Prospectus Reflection and Response due by 11:59pm on Sunday, Feb 09. In this 2-3 page response paper, tell me about the [Prospectus](#) that you created for ENGL 5304: Graduate Portfolio. What is the background or history for the project – what inspired you to write it? What did you learn during the course of producing the prospectus? How would you summarize the feedback that you received from your peers and instructor in ENGL 5304? As you revisit this document, do you see any issues or aspects that you would like to change? And, perhaps most importantly, what are the key questions that are animating this project?

Week of February 10

Making a plan / setting goals

Read *The Craft of Research*, part I, chapter 2: From Questions to a Problem

Statement of Purpose and Critical Perspective due by 11:59pm on Sunday, Feb 16. In this 1-2 page response paper, tell me about the problem that you intend to address, or critical absence that you intend to fill, with your project. What value does your project create for a field of study? What new perspective does it provide? Furthermore, tell me about the critical perspective that you intend to employ for the project. Do you use a particular theoretic framework (e.g. feminist thought, formalism, post-colonial theory)? What forms of knowledge does the project draw upon? Why do you consider your critical perspective suitable or useful?

Unit 2: GRP Revision Phase 1

Week of February 17

Locating additional sources, re-reading

Read *The Craft of Research*, part II: Sources and Resources

Discussion board post reflecting on last week's goals and setting new specific goals for the week due by noon, Monday 02/17. Focus on your ongoing process with sources.

Process Letter 1 due by 11:59pm on Friday, 02/21. In this Process Letter (see Assignment Sheet for general requirements), you must address the results of your work with sources and how that work informs your project's progress.

Week of February 24

Generating new content, blueprinting

Read *The Craft of Research*, part IV, chapters 10 and 11: Planning and Drafting, Revising and Organizing

Discussion board post reflecting on last week's goals and setting new specific goals for the week due by noon, Monday 02/24. Focus on the genre and shape of your project. What type of document are you creating? What are the scholarly expectations of that genre? What forms of knowledge get best expressed by the genre? What are its limitations?

Draft of your GRP's introductory content (2-3 pages) plus a detailed outline of the rest of the project, due by 11:59pm on Friday, Feb 28.

Week of March 03

Drafting new content

Discussion board post reflecting on status of your project and setting new specific goals for the week due by noon, Monday 03/17. Focus on what you aim to accomplish in your new content generated this week.

Submit a minimum of 4 pages of new content by 11:59pm on Friday, 03/07. This material can be rough / unpolished, and with absences, but it should be *new* material.

Week of March 10

Spring Break – no coursework.

Enjoy your break!

Week March 17

Resuming the project

Read *The Craft of Research*, part IV, chapters 12 and 15: Incorporating Sources and Revising Style

Discussion board post reflecting on status of your project and setting new specific goals for the week due by noon, Monday 03/17. Focus on what you aim to accomplish in your new content generated this week.

Submit a minimum of 4 pages of new content by 11:59pm on Friday, 03/21. This material can be rough / unpolished, and with absences, but it should be *new* material.

Mid-semester Reflection due by 11:59pm on Sunday, Mar 23.

Unit 3: GRP Revision Phase 2

Week of March 24

Generating a working draft

Discussion board post reflecting on last week's goals and setting new specific goals for the week due by noon, Monday 03/24. Focus on how the readings from last week on incorporating sources and style are affecting your writing process.

Submit a Working Draft of your GRP by 11:59pm on Friday, Mar 28. The draft can be unpolished and may contain gaps, but it should be approximately 75% complete – which in most cases means about non-bibliographic 13 pages, but can differ depending on genre. No matter what, the draft should provide a clear indication of the project's purpose and direction.

Week of March 31

Revising 1

Read and provide feedback on GRP draft of your workshop partner by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, Apr 02. Use the peer feedback handout on Blackboard to guide your feedback.

Submit a Revision Plan by 11:59 pm on Friday, Apr 04. This document should be 1-2 pages. Focus on your response to your feedback: what are the major takeaways? Any comments to which you would like to comment on or elaborate? What are your revision priorities?

Week of April 07

Revising 2

Submit Revised Complete Draft of your GRP by 11:59pm on Friday, Apr 11. This draft can still require polishing, but it should be a complete rough draft.

Process Letter 2 due by 11:59pm on Sunday, Apr 13. In this In this Process Letter (see Assignment Sheet for general requirements), you must address how you drafted and revised your project – including how the Workshop impacted your work – and indicate remaining steps for your project.

Week of April 14

Grand finale

Revised, complete GRP due by 11:59 pm on Sunday, Apr 20!

Unit 4: Presenting Your Scholarship

Week of April 21

Work on your digital platform / portfolio.

Discussion board post identifying what you want your digital portfolio to convey about your work and scholarly/professional identity due by noon, Wednesday 04/23. Focus on the place your GRP assumes in your portfolio, and what potential audiences you see for your portfolio and project.

Week of April 28

Digital platform / portfolio due by 11:59pm on Fri, 05/02.

Sign up for self-assessment conference

Week of May 05

Final Self-Assessment due by 11:59pm on Tue, 05/06.

Final Period: Wednesday, May 07 – Tuesday, May 13

**Self-assessment conferences (complete and submit Self-Assessment prior to appointment).
GRP presentations (to be scheduled).**