# ENG 208: Composing Research

Fall 2026 |Section 43, T/TH 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

## 1 Instructor information

| Instructor | Email | Office Location & Hours |
|---|---|---|
| Rachel Evans | revans3@bsu.edu | Robert Bell 257, T/TH 12:30 - 2:00 PM<br>Also available via Zoom and by appointment. |

## 2 General information

### 2.1 Course Description

**ENG 104: Composing Research** (3) Applies principles of diverse rhetorical traditions to research processes, including understanding audience, purpose, and genre in disciplinary contexts; ethics and methods of research; the varieties of researched, multimodal writing; and planning and executing a research project.

Prerequisites: ENG 103 with a minimum grade of C or better or appropriate placement per Writing Program policy.

Composing Research (ENG 208) remains essential in the Core for Research-Based Writing, enabling students to interpret and compose texts that are central to their academic and civic lives. In applying the fundamentals of rhetoric to the reading and writing of research-based texts, the class builds on prior instruction in the methods of research; stresses the rhetorical nature of research, and the elements, strategies, and conventions common to research writing; and teaches multimodal as well as the alphabetic organization and presentation of new knowledge. In the context of written compositions, the processes of thinking, organizing, researching, composing, and revising are central to learning how to construct knowledge and communicate effectively across disciplines.

This course is part of the University Core Curriculum (UCC).

### 2.2 Course Objectives

- Demonstrate proficiency in reading, evaluating, analyzing, and using material collected from electronic sources (such as visual, electronic, library databases, Internet sources, other official databases, federal government databases, reputable blogs, wikis, etc.)
- Plan, develop, and complete individual research projects that include generating a research question; finding, evaluating, and documenting relevant sources; analyzing and synthesizing researched information.
- Demonstrate cultural and disciplinary awareness of issues of audience, purpose, and conventions (including genre, grammar, format, and citation).
- Understand principles of relevant, effective, and ethical primary and secondary research.

- Draft and revise research-based writing in multiple, disciplinary and multimodal (where appropriate) formats, including a research report or paper using relevant research to support an organized argument that addresses a research question.

## 2.3 Course Content and Format

The content of ENG 208 is designed to enable students to achieve the course goals; specifically, students in ENG 208:

- Discuss, analyze, and respond to texts composed in a variety of disciplinary genres and a variety of media; from a variety of cultural perspectives; and using different kinds of research and addressing diverse audiences.
- Analyze the connections among research questions, research methods, audience, and genre, including digital, multimodal, and multimedia writing.
- Discuss and analyze the rhetorical history and impact of conventions (grammar, citation, format, and genre) as they vary by culture and discipline.
- Design research projects that involve generating a question; collecting data through various forms of primary and secondary research; and analyzing and interpreting that data using diverse perspectives and methods.
- Compose proposals, progress reports, final research reports, and other forms of disciplinary specific writing in multiple drafts, involving peer and instructor feedback, teacher-student conferences, and self-reflection.

## 2.4 Requirements

As an outcome of the course content and format, students in English 208 are required to complete:

- Three or more research projects that address different audiences, contexts, and data collection/analysis processes.
- One project will be a Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography
- One project will culminate in a research-driven, academic essay of 8-12 pages (not including appropriate documentation of sources).
- At least one project must be multimodal. (Multimodality refers to “the use of more than one semiotic mode in meaning-making, communication, and representation” (Oxford Reference). In the field of rhetoric and composition, there are generally five recognized modes: linguistic (alphabetic representations of language), visual (including charts, graphs, and diagrams), aural, spatial, and gestural.)
- Informal writing assignments (such as journals, reading reflections, in-class writings, or smaller pieces intrinsic to major research projects).
- Reading assignments for discussion, analysis, and response, including texts created through a variety of media, in a variety of disciplinary genres, from a variety of cultural perspectives.

NOTE: Students will be evaluated on a variety of writing and composing tasks, including at least three major projects and, in varying forms and combinations short, informal writing assignments (in class or out of class), quizzes, discussion board posts, self- and peer assessments, journals, blogs, and other

assignments; students will also be evaluated on the basis of writing processes (engagement with the course, attendance and participation, etc.).

In order to fulfill the University's Core Curriculum requirement in Writing Program courses, students must earn a minimum grade of C to pass; a grade of C-minus is not passing. Writing Program courses may be repeated as many times as necessary to meet the requirement but:

- The first and all other grades will show up on the transcript.
- Only the most recent grade earned in the course will be used to compute the cumulative GPA.
- A grade of W will not replace a previous grade.
- Course credit hours apply only once to graduation requirements.

# 3 Course Information

## 3.1 Required materials

• *Ballpoint, Volume 2* (free access via BSU)

• All additional readings will be made available on Canvas at no cost.

## 3.2 Overview of Assignments

Each major assignment sheet will be available on our Canvas site, and we will go over expectations in class together.

*Major Assignment 1: Autoethnography*
An autoethnography is a form of research writing that involves self-reflection. How does your own lived experience inform your understanding of a topic? What biases or perspectives do you have because of your own involvement with an issue? Since you will have the power to self-select your topic for your research assignments, this paper can act as an opportunity to begin some deeper exploration of a topic of your choice.

*Major Assignment 2: Research Proposal*
This project is designed to help you develop your research skills as you investigate a topic of your choice. You will be writing a 2–3-page formal proposal describing the research question and topic you intend to pursue in your final Annotated Bibliography and Research Essay. This question and topic should in some way respond to the "Call for Papers" for the culminating mock conference at the end of the semester.

*Major Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography*
You will be developing an annotated bibliography to demonstrate your research proficiency prior to drafting your essay. Your bibliography will be an alphabetical list of sources that you could use for your final Research Essay. You should include 10-12 sources, with a complete citation and annotation for each source.

*Major Assignment 4: Academic Research Essay*
Your culminating major project for this course is an academic research paper that acts as an

original contribution to your chosen field of study. Using the research that you have done throughout this semester you will develop a piece of academic writing a that answers the research question you developed earlier in the course. Your argument/main point should be clearly stated in a solid thesis statement, and the body of your essay must consistently and logically relate back to your thesis.

*Major Assignment 5: Research Conference Presentation*
At the end of the semester, we will conduct a mock version of a research conference, complete with organized panels, presentations, and time for questions and discussion. Many fields participate in this kind of professional and academic event, so take it as an opportunity to practice presenting your work to a group of interested peers.

*Minor Assignments*
Throughout the semester I will ask you to complete various small assignments that fall under this category, such as in-class writing, reading checks, writing groups, and weekly journals. These will be assessed for completeness and are designed to supplement the readings and work I have you do in class. This is also a major way I will be checking for your participation throughout the course, through a variety of avenues. I do not expect all of you to take equally well to all the ways you can participate, but engagement in things like discussion boards, brief reflections, small group work, and freewriting will help me (and you!) get a gauge on how you're doing and help complement the heavier lifting you do with major assignments.

### 3.3 Grading and Evaluation
All the assignments for this class will be graded holistically and weighted according to the following scale. Specific instructions and expectations for each assignment will be made available both in class and on Canvas.

- Major Assignment 1, Autoethnography – 10%
- Major Assignment 2, Research Proposal – 15%
- Major Assignment 3, Annotated Bibliography – 15%
- Major Assignment 4, Final Research Paper – 20%
- Major Assignment 5, Research Conference Presentation - 10 %
- Minor Assignments & Participation [Both In-Class and For Homework] – 20 %

## 4 Class Policies

### 4.1 Attendance Statement
Attendance and participation in class is vital to your success in this course. Many assignments we do will not be made available on Canvas and will not be able to be completed outside of class time. However, as the effects of the pandemic continue to persist, and given the collective trauma we continue to deal with in our own ways, I feel it's fair to maintain a bit of flexibility. After a total of 6 unexcused absences (or roughly three weeks of class time) I will require you to meet with me to discuss how your grade may be impacted and how you can best succeed going forward.

As we continue through the semester, I will do my best to be communicative and transparent with you whenever possible, and I ask that you return that courtesy.

## 4.2 Late & Missing Work

I have structured the course schedule in a way that is meant to spread out the workload and provoke minimum stress, but I understand that this class is not the only thing you do. At this time, I do not have plans to impose any hard and fast deductions for late work, but missing assignments will receive a 0 until submitted.

An extension of one week will be available for all assignments, but you must make a reasonable effort to be communicative with me regarding any challenges you have or accommodations you need for any of our major projects, both as a courtesy to my time and so we can work together to ensure you remain on track to complete all the necessary work for this course.

## 4.3 Office Hours Statement

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday between 12:30 pm and 2 pm. You are welcome to meet with me in my office in Robert Bell or online during those times. If that time doesn't work for you, I am happy to work with you on alternative arrangements that can meet your needs.

## 4.4 Academic Integrity Statement

Outright using someone else's ideas or words as your own or insinuating them as such on any assignment is plagiarism. It is a violation of the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities as defined in the student handbook and will be treated as such. If you are concerned about inadvertently violating this policy, please see me before completing the assignment in question.

*genAI/ChatGPT Statement:*

The use of ChatGPT, Claude, or any other genAI platform tool to generate ideas, written content, or to produce any other material is **prohibited** in this course. This policy exists for a number of reasons:

- This class is about improving your writing, reading, and research skills. If you are not doing that work yourself, you are not improving. Continued use of these kinds of tools can seriously atrophy your ability to do work like critical thinking, writing, and reading without them (see this recent study from MIT for more detail).
- AI tools of all kinds involve sticky academic honesty issues, since it raises the question of whether the work is truly yours and because tools like ChatGPT rely on training that utilizes a truly unfathomable amount of uncredited work, per their creators' own admissions.
- By their own admission, using genAI tools does not produce reliably accurate results (remember the lawyers who used them to write briefs, just to have the LLM "hallucinate" cases?).
- ChatGPT and other LLMs have a serious negative environmental impact that is accelerating climate change around the globe and harming quality of life for those who live nearest to tech centers (see sources here, here, here, and here for more information, as well as this recent story covering the harm to Memphis communities caused by Elon Musk's xAI supercomputer facility). The public debate regarding the

recent boom of generative AI datacenters is ongoing and evolving, but these issues are very much still present in that debate.
- genAI, at all levels, is plagued with labor issues, including exploitation of workers' health, economic stability, and well-being. OpenAI (the creators of ChatGPT), as one example, exploits workers from the global south, especially workers in prisons and refugee camps, workers in Kenya, the Philippines, Columbia, and elsewhere (see sources here, here, here, here, here, and here for more information).

Put more bluntly, the use of genAI tools has no meaningfully positive impact on your writing in a course that is meant to instill foundational skills. You are only cheating yourself out of the learning experience that this class is meant to offer and contributing to environmental harm and labor exploitation through its use. I truly, genuinely believe that all of you are very capable students, and that becoming reliant on this technology can only hinder your development. Due to their unethical nature, the use of ChatGPT and any other genAI tools is not part of this classroom community.

If you are caught using these tools, you will be required to completely rewrite the relevant assignment. Failure to do so will result in a score of 0 for the assignment.

### 4.5 Personal Technology Statement

We will frequently use collaborative documents and storage like Google Drive, access online course material and do online research and writing in class. Laptops are allowed to be out during any class time for note taking unless otherwise advised, but I do ask that phone use be kept to a minimum. I am fine with you checking something or sending a quick text if you're done with individual and group work for that day or you are waiting for an important message, but please do not be on any device actively ignoring class.

### 4.6 Behavior and Respect Statement

Since you all come from a variety of backgrounds and interests, I do not expect all of us to agree with each other all of the time. Many of the readings we will engage with in this class are designed to appeal to our deeply held ideologies and emotions. Debating on issues you care about is a great way to grow your argumentative muscles, but that shouldn't come at the cost of respecting both your peers and me. For collaborative learning to be effective, you must respect the dignity of your classmates, yourself, your instructor, and our classroom environment. Any overtly hateful or offensive behavior (racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.) will not be tolerated, either in class or in your written assignments. Any student demonstrating unacceptable behavior may expect either a verbal or written warning or may be asked to leave class for that period, depending on the nature of the behavior. Talk with me as soon as possible if any situation arises that will negatively affect your experience of this course.

### 4.7 Accommodation Statement

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities and documentation of a disability needs to be on file with them as soon as possible so that I can provide any accommodations you require in a timely manner. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

## 4.8 FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects your privacy as a student; university personnel and faculty are not permitted to share information about your academic progress with anyone outside the university (e.g., your parents) without your permission. Blogs, websites, and wikis are public. Thus, if you wish to protect your privacy, or simply prefer to remain anonymous, you may take precautions by using a pseudonym that won't be identifiable to people outside of this course. Please note that I will not grade or evaluate any of your work publicly.

## 4.9 Non-Discrimination Statement

Ball State University is committed to fostering and promoting a healthy learning community. All students will be treated with respect, tolerance, and equality regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, or economic status. If for any reason a student feels discriminated against in the classroom based on these differences, they should contact the instructor or the department chair. The Office of University Compliance or the Office of Student Rights and Community Standards may be contacted if the student is not satisfied with the results of the meeting with the instructor or department chair. The Ball State University community believes in the strength of diversity and recognizes the importance of appreciating equality.

## 4.10 The Writing Center

Want extra feedback on your papers? The Writing Center is a community of Ball State students who value writing. Visit the Writing Center, located in RB 291, to collaborate with one of their trained peer tutors on any project for any major. The Writing Center is a comfortable, supportive environment for writers from all communities and backgrounds. They are open seven days a week, and any appointment made during their regular hours can be held online or in person. To make an appointment, go to ballstate.mywconline.com.

## 4.11 The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free tutoring for many courses on campus, including science and humanities, modern and classical languages, math and business, help with any writing task, and study strategies such as time management, test-taking, note-taking, and effective textbook reading. Call 765-285-1006 or visit NQ 350 to make an appointment with a tutor.

## 4.12 Land Acknowledgement

As we come together as a learning community, I want to acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional homelands of the Myaamiaki (Miami) and Lenape (Delaware) peoples upon whose territory the university stands.