

SRSU PSY 4109 – Readings & Research Spring 2025

Course Title:	Readings & Research
Recommended Text:	Graff, G., Birkenstein, C., Durst, R., & Panning Davies, L. J. (2024). <i>They say /I say: The moves that matter in academic writing with readings</i> . (6 th ed.). W. W. Norton & Company.
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Student Hours:	By Appointment: https://calendly.com/amtsulross/office-hours-appointment

Course Description:

This Readings & Research is designed as a two-credit course for students who need to complete graduation requirements. Its purpose is to ensure that you achieve acceptable performance in the practical application of the academic competencies of: 1) written (and oral) communication, 2) critical thinking and reasoning, and 3) information literacy. This section of Readings & Research will focus on a particular topic, chosen by you. You are provided with supplemental readings and given guidance on preparing and responding to arguments in sources based on your topic selection. Your goal is to complete a final paper that requires research and assessment of print and online sources relevant to your topic.

Course Objective:

The objective of this course is to reach mastery of academic competencies of written (and oral) communication, critical thinking and reasoning, and information literacy. In this particular course, you will learn how to interrogate your views and beliefs of controversial topics and, analyze the cogency and resonance of others' views and beliefs related to their arguments. Through your own self-interrogations, you will concentrate on enhancing your **own** abilities, and create a coherent case to substantiate what you **can** do. In addition, practicing these academic competencies involves discovery, curiosity and creativity that leads to new understandings, some of which may surprise or startle you. Your abilities may spring from the folds of these academic competencies addressed in the learning outcomes below.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The student learning outcomes of this course are to engage you in the **process** of learning, and to become skilled in three academic competencies. The pursuit of mastery in these competencies takes you through a process of intellectual and personal growth, which develops key aptitudes for pursuing inquiry in science. The scientific approach to learning in the humanities involves exploration, discovery, and investigation of the human experience in traditional, individual and societal movements. In additions, these academic competencies when mastered, form a foundation that may propel you for future scholastic or professional success. Throughout the course, these are the outcomes we will aspire towards:

1. **Written (and oral) communication.** Written (and oral) communication stems from possessing the skill to read and comprehend primary and secondary sources in argumentation and research. These sources typically include reliable (and generally trustworthy) newspapers, journals and books, both in print and digital formats. Once reading is mastered, then the following aims are central to communication in writing and speech:
 - a. Identifying, analyzing and evaluating arguments using logic and appropriate rhetorical techniques.
 - b. Constructing a response that infers, synthesizes and/or incorporates the words and ideas of others using formal documentation.
 - c. Formulating a meaningful thesis statement that justifies **your** response that can coincide with, distinguish, divert, and most importantly extend others' arguments.
 - d. Styling **your** thesis statement that anchors development of your argument appropriate to audience and purposes as well as employing effective tone, word choice, and sentence (syntax) patterns.
 - e. **Method of Formative Assessment: Journal Article Summary and Final Essay**
2. **Information Literacy.** Information literacy refers to the skill in identifying, retrieving, and evaluating the reliability and validity of sources, and organizing and citing properly a wide range of resources including print, graphic and digital for independent learning and creative and practical problem solving. When becoming information literate, you will:
 - a. Identify and apply the most appropriate, ethical and legal methods and search tools to retrieve information.
 - b. Determine the nature and extent of the information needed and evaluate its significance and relevance for your specific purpose.
 - c. Formulate research questions that aid in exploration and analysis.
 - d. **Method of Formative Assessment: Journal Article Summary and Final Essay**
3. **Critical Thinking and Reasoning.** Critical thinking involves the ability to interpret and analyze a subject respectfully and insightfully. Reasoning refers to further thinking about a subject's intentions in at most a logical fashion. The steps towards critical thinking and reasoning includes:
 - a. Outlining your specific position (thesis/hypothesis) that accounts multiple perspectives on an issue.
 - b. Evaluating others' viewpoints or assumptions against your own viewpoints or assumptions and, analyzing arguments for implied and direct meaning and for tone, audience, and purpose.
 - c. Drawing reasonable speculations based on the evidence provided using logic and other appeals that ends with **your** qualified but necessary conclusion.
 - d. Identify and avoid flawed logic or logical fallacies and participate constructively in discourse that may be controversial in nature.
 - e. **Method of Summative Assessment: Final Essay**

Course Requirements:

1. All the readings must be accessed and read in preparation for class.
2. Respect for students and lecturer must be maintained at all times when we meet online and in person. Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe,

oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. We will do our best to embrace the difficulty of fruitfully discussing controversial and sensitive issues. Respect is a basic human characteristic that entitles each person to their own rights and identity. It also helps to nurture a healthy learning environment. If you recognize that respecting others may be a problem, please be courteous and alert me or more suitable personnel (e.g. Sul Ross State University psychologists, family members, lecturers, close friends) and or refer to the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

SRSU Disability Services – AMERICANS with DISABILITIES ACT STATEMENT:

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. RGC students can also contact Alejandra Valdez, at 830-758-5006 or email alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/356 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](#). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

Library Services Statement

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your Lobold and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

Honoring Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to

engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Other instances of academic misconduct are lying in connection with your academic work, cheating, misrepresenting facts and/or collusion and **using open AI** sources unless ***permission is expressly given*** for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall. All these are contrary to the purpose of any educational institution and will be dealt with **most severely** to the extent of the university's disciplinary policy and/or through legal action if indicated. An instructor who determines that a student has been dishonest academically can at a minimum issue no credit for the assignment/exam, and/or pursue more severe penalties, including but not limited to failing the course. Further information about *Academic Honesty* can be read in the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

Course Behaviors – Respect & Disruptions

Watch the VIDEO on NETTIQUETTE - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMk_Zv7nB8 and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80uRE972uQ0>

You are encouraged and expected to openly engage in discussions, ask questions, share ideas, and express your thoughts in this web-based course in the same manner as in a face-to-face course. Please treat each other with dignity and respect and avoid disruptive behaviors. You are responsible for knowing what behaviors are acceptable versus unacceptable as referred to in the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

Observing Class Guidelines

Class Attendance

This is a course that requires in class, hands on experience and discussion. **Class attendance IS REQUIRED and participation is important.** Class participation and attendance will be worth **10%** of the final grade. The percentage is considerable so your presence will *help* your ability to complete all of assignments for this class. If you are unable to attend a class session, please discuss the reason with me and make arrangements for missed class. Excessive unexcused absences (at least 2 missed class sessions per week) will result in a **failing grade** for the course. *In particular, ceasing to attend classes for three consecutive class meetings without contacting the instructor will result in the issuance of a grade of FW which indicates "stopped attending."* This grade of FW will be calculated into the student's GPA as an F and may result in dismissal. In addition, this status will be reported to Registrar and may result in a reduction of financial aid monies. It is assumed that a student will attend all classes for which he/she is registered. Class attendance is governed by the SRSU policy stated in the schedule of classes. Excused absences entail established religious observance, or providing emergency, university-authorized, legal or medical documentation.

Participation - You are expected to be on time for each class session and you should be actively involved. *Active involvement includes prompt and regular attendance, active listening, writing, participating via an online poll or quiz, engaging in discussions, volunteering or doodling.* Early departure or late arrival for class (more than 15 minutes) on a weekly basis will lower your participation grade. If you repeatedly leave early or are late to class (**more than once per week**), this will be counted as one absence and may result in a failing grade for the course. Besides

attendance, all other forms of participation judged subjectively by me that showcases active involvement will increase your participation grade.

Late Assignments/Projects/Checklists

You are expected to meet assignment deadlines. **All assignments must be submitted in Blackboard BEFORE the next session.** Late exercises, summaries, responses and essays will be reduced by 10% of the overall assignment for the first day of lateness. Beyond the first day and unexcused absences, there will be an additional 40% deduction and no feedback from me. Beyond one week and unexcused absences, all points will be lost. For excused absences (university-authorized, legal or medical issues), speak with me **before the absence** so arrangements can be made.

Evaluation:

Exercises (10) – These exercises are designed to build your skills in the academic competencies. Firstly, you will read primary sources to learn the goals of written (and oral) communication. Most of the exercises will come from the Graff & Birkenstein (2024) text. Other exercises given are designed to ensure that you understand the major elements of scientific inquiry. For example, you will have exercises to demonstrate that you understand plagiarism, ethics generation of hypotheses or operational definitions, correlations, and/or the structure of a research papers. In addition, extra practice for any of these assignments may be proffered as extra credit.

Article Summaries (2) and Responses (2) – You will write two article summaries to learn the aims of information literacy. As you write these summaries (two pages), you will practice written communication strategies. Furthermore, you will do critical thinking and reasoning as you write your response (four pages) to two critical readings as you contrast your viewpoints with those belonging to the authors. Instructions for how these responses are to be constructed will be provided and will be posted on Blackboard. The responses are crucial to your slow and steady development of your critical inquiry and information literacy skills.

Final Essay (1) - You will write one final (persuasive) essay that combines the skills gained from written (and oral) communication, information literacy and critical thinking and reasoning. This essay will be one 8-10 page research paper that meets college level standards for content, organization, style, grammar, mechanics, and format. You will need to manage the research and writing process effectively showing evidence of planning for research project methods and resource use.

Grading

You are expected to complete reading assignments prior to class sessions and to engage in thoughtful discussions in light of these assignments.

Grading:	800 points total	Final Grade
Exercises	30 points (10@30 points)	30%
Article Summaries & Responses	50 points (4@50 points)	20%
Final Essay	150 points	15%
Attendance/Participation:	150 points total	15%

Course Outline

(This schedule and the topics listed below are subject to modification by the instructor.)

Day	Content
Week of January 20th	Introductions ☺
Homework	Exercise (1)
Week of January 27th	Graff & Birkenstein (2024)
Homework	Exercises (2, 3 & 4)
Week of February 3rd	Graff & Birkenstein (2024)
Homework	Exercises (5 & 6)
Week of February 10th	Graff & Birkenstein (2024)
Homework	Exercises (7 & 8)
Week of February 17th	Graff & Birkenstein (2024)
Homework	Exercises (9 & 10)
Week of February 24th	Article reading (1)
Homework	Article Summary (2)
Week of March 3rd	Article Reading (2)
Homework	Article Summary (2)
Week of March 17th	Critical Reading (1)
Homework	Article Response (1)
Week of March 24th	Critical Reading (2)
Homework	Article Response (2)
Weeks of March 31 st & April 7th	Reviews of Summaries
Homework	Final Essay
Weeks of April 14 th and 21 st	Review for Final Essay
Homework	Final Essay
Week of April 28th	Review for Final Essay