General Policy Statement for ENGL 3302, 3372, 3381, 5301, 5303, 5334
Dr. Brian McFadden

1) Remember that it is a student’s job to take responsibility for his or her own education. Many students want to think that they are customers of education, since the customer is always right and should always get what s/he pays for. This is a university, however, not a department store, and I am a professor, not a customer service representative. A better analogy would be that of a patient and doctor; if you don't follow the doctor's recommendations, you are going to stay sick, and you have to pay the doctor whether or not you get better. The best analogy is the stock market - the more you invest in your education, the more you gain in the long term, but that doesn't mean there won't be some times when your grade and your ego will have to take a short-term hit if you aren't keeping up on things.

I must give you both an opportunity to take this class and an honest teaching effort; a good grade, you must earn. I will gladly explain my grading to you, but unless it becomes clear TO ME that I have made a major error, I will not change grades without a directive from the department chair or other appropriate university authority. I do not give pluses or minuses for final grades, and I do not round up; 89.9% is a B, for example. Your GPA is your responsibility - if you want to get into professional/graduate school, stay in your extracurriculars, or keep a scholarship, you have to make the effort to raise your grade, not me. Also, I grade on results, not effort, because effort cannot be quantified and is incredibly variable; some people can get A's easily, and others have to struggle for a C. Therefore, "I worked hard – I deserve an A" is not a valid argument.

2) Civility is expected in all discussions. In my classes we deal with some issues about which people disagree, and while I do not expect to be agreed with or to agree with you at all times, I expect to be treated with respect, and in turn I will treat you with respect. Note that disagreement is not equal to disrespect - it is possible to have spirited but respectful disagreement, despite what you see all too often in the media. I also expect students to have this same attitude towards each other; you may not agree with what someone else thinks, but if you can articulate your position politely and back it up, the class will benefit by having a choice of opinions, and you and your classmates both get something new to think about. This applies to office hours, online interaction, and other out-of-class contact as well.

3) Personal attacks of any kind have no place in the classroom; keep your disagreement about the subject matter and not about the personal traits of your classmates. A severe enough infraction may result in dismissal from my classroom, and it may also carry departmental or university penalties; at all costs, avoid discriminatory or harassing comments. See above about mutual respect and about disagreement not being equal to disrespect. This applies to office hours, online interaction, and other out-of-class contact as well.

4) You should have the day's assignment done when you attend class, and you should only be doing work for my class when you are in my classroom; this requires that you have the text, paper and pen(cil), bluebooks, handouts, and any other materials necessary for this class. If you come to class unprepared, I reserve the right to dismiss you. You are in my classroom to participate in my class, not to do your homework for another class, read the paper, chat with your classmates, make calls, text your friends, play 'Plants vs. Zombies' or 'Candy Crush', etc. When class starts, everything else should go on hold for its duration, and I expect you to participate fully. Sleeping or other blatant inattention in class is an extreme form of disrespect. If I ask three consecutive questions and get no serious answers, I reserve the right to throw an impromptu quiz that cannot be made up.

5) I presume that most people will stay in this class. However, remember that if you decide to drop or withdraw, you can't just stop showing up and expect me to give you a W. I will give a W to anyone who formally withdraws from the class online or at the Registrar's Office, but University regulations do not allow me to give you a W unless you have formally withdrawn from the class. If you just stop coming to class without withdrawing, the Banner system will not let me do anything other than fail you at the end of the semester. Be aware of the drop deadline date for each semester. If you do decide to drop, a courtesy email message to inform me would be greatly appreciated so that I can update my records; fear not, I will not send you a nasty reply, but I will thank you for your courtesy. Remember the university's withdrawal policy – students may only withdraw from six classes over their university career, so think carefully about doing so! Also, if you attempt to withdraw in order to avoid an F imposed for academic dishonesty, university operating procedure says that the F will stand.

6) Raise your hand if you have a comment – I will try to get everyone's comments in order and to give everyone their say. Don't dominate the discussion – I like to hear lots of opinions, and I'm sure your classmates do too, including their own. If I say "Let's hear from someone else," don't be offended; everyone needs to participate, since there is a participation grade in this class. Take it instead as a sign that I acknowledge and appreciate that you are participating.

7) MWF classes run from the hour to fifty minutes after the hour; TTh or MW classes run for eighty minutes, and summer classes run for an hour and fifty minutes. Do not start getting ready to go until I indicate that class is over; it's a pet peeve of mine, and besides, if I make an announcement or someone asks an important question, you won't hear it if you are shuffling
papers, digging through a backpack, etc. Alexander Pope famously said, "'Tis with our judgments as our watches; none / Goes just alike, but each believes his own." To remedy this situation, my watch is the final authority on time in my classroom; I'll try to keep it on my cell phone time, which is generally in synch with the U.S. atomic clock in Colorado.

8) Don't distract your classmates' attention by excessive motion or noise.
   - Most classrooms in this building have the door in the front, so a person walking in late is very conspicuous. A late arrival distracts your classmates and annoys your instructor; avoid tardiness (I count three tardies as an absence). Also, I collect the attendance sheet from the class ten to fifteen minutes into class; if you come in late, see me at the end of class to sign in tardy. Failure to sign the attendance sheet counts as an absence, whether you were there or not!
   - Entering and leaving the room is very distracting. If you have to use the bathroom, get a drink, etc., do it before or after class; do not leave the room without my permission, and do not ask permission to leave unless it is an emergency (what constitutes an emergency is at my discretion).
   - Turn off cell phones, pagers, watch alarms, or anything else that makes noise. If you must have one (you are on call for a job, there is an urgent situation such as pregnancy or family emergency, etc.), set it for silent mode or vibration, and let me know beforehand why you must have it on. What constitutes necessity is at my discretion and I reserve the right to refuse permission. I will keep my phone on for the campus emergency notification system.

9) I have occasionally seen students with pocket knives attached to key rings, in backpacks or purses, etc. While you probably have a good reason for having them and only use them to open bottles, pull corks, trim nails, open letters, etc., be advised that the State of Texas considers them weapons on state property. There is no need to cut anything in my classroom, so please leave them home.

10) It is not my responsibility to contact you to find out why you were absent; it is your responsibility to let me know what happened and to provide appropriate documentation for your absence. Falsifying the attendance sheet or submitting false documentation will be considered academic dishonesty. It is also your responsibility to be aware of your attendance status; my attendance sheet comes around every class period and you are more than welcome to check it. I check the sheet every couple of weeks and will not hesitate to send out a dean's letter if you exceed the allowable unexcused absences; if you have a large number of absences and a good reason, make an appointment to see me (we may be able to work things out). I give a lecture, lead a discussion, run a Powerpoint show, etc., once and only once; you are responsible for getting any announcements and notes from your classmates or the website should you miss class. Also, if you have a reason for an extended absence, let me and your dean know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements; if you miss four consecutive class days without informing me of your situation, I reserve the right to fail you for the course. (Just think of what your boss would do if you stopped showing up for work without calling in!) In graduate courses, attendance is expected barring major emergencies, and contacting me beforehand or as soon afterward as possible should go without saying. All students are expected to make every effort to contact me in a timely fashion, by multiple means if necessary - "I couldn't get through" is not a valid excuse.

11) You are responsible for knowing what's in this statement, the plagiarism statement, the syllabus, any email I send out, and any other information that I hand out or post on the website, so "I didn't know about it" or "It wasn't on the syllabus" will not be accepted as excuses or defenses. The class schedule on my syllabus is necessarily general, while the website usually has the more specific daily assignments. I usually put most of the paper handouts on the class website, in addition to handing out hard copies on the first day of class.

12) I am more than willing to see you, but unless it is an emergency, it is a bad idea to try to talk to me before or between classes; there may be last-minute preparations or technical issues that I am working on. If my office hours do not match your schedule, make an appointment; I'll work with you as best I can. Also, unless I explicitly give you permission to call me at home or on my cell phone (which is theoretically possible, but which I have never done), do not do so. Email is the best way to get in touch with me - I check frequently; failing that, call my voicemail at 806-834-8033.

13) Technological literacy is expected in this class.
   - I sometimes use email to send out class-wide messages, so check your email frequently; it is your responsibility to know what is going on in your academic life. Every student is automatically assigned an E-raider (yourname@ttu.edu) mail account. Banner automatically composes a class mailing list on Lyris; it uses ONLY E-RAIDER ADDRESSES. If you use another ISP, make sure your email program can access your TTU account; it is no longer possible to redirect mail from a TTU account to another ISP's account.
   - If I allow your class to submit work via email, you may expect me to confirm its receipt within 24 hours. Remember that I am not a machine and occasionally want to do things like sleeping and eating; if you send me email at 6:00 PM or 3:00 AM, you probably will not get an answer until the next day, so please give me time to respond. A mailbox full of "did you get my paper?" messages is a real pain! If you don't get a confirmation email within 24 hours, THEN you should contact me to make sure that I received your submission; I recommend that you submit any work early enough...
that you leave yourself a bit of time in case you have to resend it. "It got lost in the network" is not an excuse for late or missing work.

• Many assignments or messages will be delivered via Dropbox or Evernote or the website - I will not accept "I couldn't download it" as an excuse. If you do have download problems, I will try to have my PDF’s set early in the semester - bring me a blank CD-R or flash drive and I will give you the assignments that way, or I can email them to you in an emergency (be forewarned, some files are big). Also, if you live off-campus, be aware of how to use the TTU VPN system.

• I have no theoretical objections to you using electronic texts in my classroom via a laptop or tablet or smartphone, but you had better be doing class work on it; the practical concern is that people text, play PvZ or Candy Crush, read email, etc., and stop paying attention to class. You will have the privilege of using electronic devices until people abuse them three times; on the third strike, devices are out (and your classmates will know who to thank for it.)

• If your car doesn’t work, you call a mechanic, not a carpenter, even though the carpenter knows something about tools. If you are sick, you call a doctor, not a vet, although the vet knows something about illnesses. If you have computer problems, contact Help Central or an IT specialist first and then, if the problem persists, contact me to let me know something is up; I know something about computers, but tech support people know the little ins and outs and quirks of the system better than I do. Only contact me if there is a problem with course content (I forgot to put a PDF in Dropbox, I have the wrong PDF linked, the website is misspelled or unclear, etc.)

14) My participation grade calculation will be based on the points earned for homework, unannounced quizzes, and in-class assignments - the percentage of points you earn divided by the total possible points will be your participation base grade. I may add 1-10 points at my discretion for frequent participators, but your participation grade will not go over 100%. I then assess any penalty for absences - check your syllabus for my calculation method for your particular class.

15) Several times I have had a student in my class get an F for not turning in an essay or skipping the final. All major assignments (defined as essays of any length, response papers, projects, and examinations - see your syllabus for specifics) must be completed to pass the course. Don't let all your work for the course (and your course fee!) go to waste. Also, the Registrar prohibits faculty from giving incompletes to undergraduates without permission of the dean (we are not even able to enter an I on Banner). I do not grant incompletes to undergraduates unless there is a compelling situation beyond your control that precludes completion of your coursework; because poor planning on your part is avoidable, I do not consider it a compelling reason for an incomplete.

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