

ENGL 3312 - Creative Writing I
Place-Based Writing in Creative Nonfiction

Semester: Fall 2026

Instructor: Tara Propper

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Office Hours: My office hours will be conducted via Zoom or in-person on M/W/F 12:40-2PM or by appointment.

Course Description

“What all such writing has in common is faithfulness to some reality that the writer did not invent—to a shared history, to real people, to actual events, to places one can visit, to facts one can check. [...] One virtue of the term is that the sly little prefix non – implies a promise –that such literature is neither feigned nor counterfeit; it’s answerable not merely to the writer’s imagination but to a world beyond the page, a world that precedes and surrounds and outlasts the act of writing” - Scott Russel Sanders, *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*

In his introduction to the *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*, Scott Russell Sanders suggests that while fiction attempts to "invent" a novel reality, nonfiction provides a "recording" of a lived reality. Accordingly, the nonfiction writer’s job is to bare witness to an event, place, history, or cultural milieu, locating these moments within a wider tapestry of human experience and finding connections between past and present, individual and collective, art and truth. In this course, we will explore the art, craft, and work of creative nonfiction, highlighting specifically the places and environments that house our understanding of history, culture, language, and perspective. Furthermore, we will investigate the ethical choices creative nonfiction writers must make in order to truthfully and fairly represent the real-world locations and communities they take as their subjects.

Topics leading our discussion include the following: In what ways might setting speak in our writing? How can we read history and culture into a place? What are the techniques a writer might use to balance an adherence to objective, real-world events, locations, and/or people with their own honest acknowledgment of their personal experiences and subjective perspectives? How do writers ensure that their writing (which stems from individual lived experiences) contains a moral argument which extends beyond the writer's subjective perspective and serves a larger culture or community?

Statement on Appropriate Creative Content

Art is designed to question and interrogate the presuppositions of our everyday experiences. However, please remain tactful and tasteful in all handling of your creative endeavors. Given that this is an academic setting, make sure the topics you choose to write about and the ways in which you discuss

these topics maintain basic rules of speech and decorum. In other words, avoid expletives and cruel, offensive, or insensitive material. This being an upper-division course, I will rely on your judgment and discretion in determining what constitutes cruel and insensitive material.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Read, discuss, and analyze a range of creative nonfiction subgenres with an ear toward purpose, audience, and context;
- Interpret and apply a variety of place writing strategies to one's own writing;
- Investigate ethical questions of representation in creative nonfiction writing;
- Examine the role of setting/environments within creative nonfiction, considering the relationship between place, history, culture, and identity;

Texts

Weekly readings will be shared on Canvas. Students will not be expected to purchase any textbooks for this class.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Missing more than two weeks of classes is grounds for failing the class. It is your responsibility to find out from other students what happened in class during your absence.

Grade Computation

Grading for writing projects will be based on the fulfillment of the following assignments:

Weekly Journal Entry/Process Work (10%) — Students will be required to conduct in-class writing that reflects upon common readings and writing process benchmarks. Accordingly, all students should have a physical journal reserved for the class that they submit to the instructor weekly.

Weekly Writing Conferences —(10%) Everyone is required to attend at least three of the Weekly Writing Conferences, which will be held every Friday throughout the semester. These conferences offer an opportunity to receive individualized feedback on your creative writing. At the start of the semester, the instructor will post the workshop schedule to the Announcements section of our course Canvas page.

East Texas Literary Map (Creative Composition) (30%) — Students are invited to write about the places that comprise the East Texas and surrounding region. This assignment also incorporates a mapping component, requiring students to write about and map two different locations in the East Texas and/or surrounding region. Each location that students write about should be a minimum of 800

words and maximum 1,000 words. The total word count, including both locations, will be a minimum of 1600 words and maximum of 2,000 words.

Creative Response Project (20%) — Students will be required to write an extensive response to a peer's creative project (word count is 1,000 words).

Self-Reflective Writing Practices Paper and Presentation (30%) — Students will write an 800-word reflection paper discussing two ethical choices that impacted their writing practices. Students will also develop a 10-minute presentation that showcases sections of their writing and discusses ethical writing practices in creative nonfiction.

Grading

To compute the final course grade, the following point totals are assigned to the standard letter grades of A through F:

A = 90-100 points

B = 80-89 points

C = 70-79 points

D = 60-69 points

F = 59 points and below

Artificial Intelligence Policy

Since this class emphasizes creativity and the creative process, students are prohibited from using artificial intelligence as a substitute for authorship of writing assignments, including the following assignments: journal/process work, East Texas Literary Map project, Creative response project, and Self-Reflective Writing Practices paper. In other words, no work that is generated by AI will be accepted. All major assignments will be submitted through UT Tyler's plagiarism detection software, TurnItIn. Any submission that is reported to have used AI by UT Tyler's AI-generated software, TurnItIn, will be considered plagiarized. Additionally, this software can detect work that has been edited and revised by proofreading programs, such as Grammarly.

If students plan on using grammar assistance tools, such as Grammarly, they are required to first save a copy of their rough draft prior to applying such tools to their written work. This will ensure that students have a copy of their paper written without AI assistance.

If students utilize AI tools for grammar assistance, then students must acknowledge this in a Statement of AI usage upon submission. Additionally, any submission that includes references and citations that do not exist or have been fabricated will **receive a grade of zero**.

Furthermore, if you have sentence-level challenges, then please make an appointment to speak with me or schedule a visit with the Center for Writing Excellence.

For more information, review the plagiarism policy listed below on the syllabus.

University Position on AI Initiatives:

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. For this course, using AI to write papers is not permitted in this course at all. I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work without human or artificial intelligence assistance is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

Late Projects

I will penalize late papers: half of a letter grade (e.g., A to B+) for the first day late; after that, a full letter grade (e.g., A to B).

There may be situations which warrant consideration for exceptions to the late draft policy. For consideration of an exception, you should establish your credibility as a student by engaging in substantive conversation via our Discussion Board and submitting work on time. Then, should a situation occur that hinders you from turning an assignment in on time, you will have a leg to stand on.

Email Policy

Email is the easiest way to contact me. However, etiquette and courtesy in correspondence is important; that is, be rhetorical and think about your audience. Because email is quick and easy, people often do not take the time to formulate emails that will effectively communicate what is desired. When emailing me, please include a subject/title for your email, an opening address (Dear Dr. Proper...), and a closing signature.

I will check my email regularly Mondays-Fridays from 9am-5pm. I expect everyone to check their email at the same frequency. Put simply, you need to check your email regularly Mondays-Fridays from 9am-5pm. If you anticipate inconsistent email access being an issue, please speak with me. You can expect a response from me within 48 hours.

Syllabus Changes

The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grading criteria and absence and make-up policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice as long as the change is without prejudice to the students.

Course Schedule

	Readings	Assignments
Week 1	Course Syllabus and Assignments Sanders's "Introduction" (<i>Touchstone</i>)	Journal Response 1
Week 2 Place-based Writing: History, Culture, and Home	Alessi, "On Writing About Place: Appalachia"	Journal Response 2 ***Group A meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 3	Didion, <i>Where I Was From</i> (Ch. 3 & 4)	Journal Response 3 ***Group B meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 4	Ketcham, "Recorded Lightning" Ward, "The Art of Writing Place"	Journal Response 4 ***Group C meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 5 Place, Language, and Literacy	Secret Pittsburgh Archive Gurnah, Abdulrazak, "Writing Place"	Journal Response 5 ***Group D meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 6	Tan, "Mother Tongue"	Journal Response 6

		***Group A meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 7 The Ethics of Representation in Creative Nonfiction	Bloom, “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction” Hart, “Reporting” from <i>Storycraft</i>	***Group B meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 8	Doty, “Return to Sender”	***East Texas Literary Map due ***Group C meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 9	***Style Workshop	***Group D meets for writing conferences on Friday

Week 10 Place in the Lyric Essay	***Style Workshop	Journal Response #7 ***Group A meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 11 Place in Literary Journalism	***Style Workshop	Journal Response 8 ***Group B meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 12	Clark, “The Line Between Fact and Fiction”	***Group C meets for writing conferences on Friday ***Creative Response Paper due
Week 13	Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”	Journal Response 9 ***Group D meets for writing conferences on Friday
Week 14 Thanksgiving Break		
Week 15	Reading/Presentation of Creative Work	Journal Response 10

		***Final Ethical Reflection Essay

Additional Policies:

University Policies and Information

Withdrawing from Class

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance.

Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal.. Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to

honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval.

The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The

form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the Registrar's Form Library.

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military Affiliated Students

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.

- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3. The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to Excused Absences for University Events or Activities as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form.

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

copying from another student's test paper;

using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;

possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;

using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;

collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;

discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;

divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;

substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;

paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;

falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;

taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and

misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

ii. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

iii. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

Student Resources:

Resources to assist you in the course

- UT Tyler Student Accessibility and Resource (SAR) Office (provides needed accommodations to students with document needs related to access and learning) - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services/>
- UT Tyler Writing Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/writing-center/>
- The Mathematics Learning Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/departments/mathematics/math-learning-center/>
- UT Tyler PASS Tutoring Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/tutoring/>
- UT Tyler Supplemental Instruction - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/supplemental-instruction/>
- Upswing (24/7 online tutoring) - covers nearly all undergraduate course areas - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/tutoring/online/>
- Robert Muntz Library and Library Liaison - <https://www.uttyler.edu/library/>
- Canvas 101 (learn to use Canvas, proctoring, Unicheck, and other software) - <https://www.uttyler.edu/canvas/>
- Digital Support Toolkit (for supported courses only. Students are automatically enrolled in the toolkit for supported courses) -

- LIB 422 -- Computer Lab where students can take a proctored exam
- The Career Success Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/career-success/>
- UT Tyler Testing Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/testing-center/>
- Office of Research & Scholarship Design and Data Analysis Lab - <https://www.uttyler.edu/research/office/ors-research-design-data-analysis-lab/>

Resources available to UT Tyler Students

- UT Tyler Counseling Center (available to all students) - <https://www.uttyler.edu/student-life/health-wellness/student-counseling-center>
- MySSP App (24/7 access to Student Support Program counseling through phone or chat and online wellness resources available in a variety of languages)
- Student Assistance and Advocacy Center - <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/student-success/>
- Military and Veterans Success Center (supports for our military-affiliated students) - <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/military-veterans-success-center/>
- UT Tyler Patriot Food Pantry - <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/service-learning/food-pantry/>
- UT Tyler Financial Aid and Scholarships - <https://www.uttyler.edu/admissions-aid/tuition-financial-aid-fees/>
- UT Tyler Student Business Services (pay or set up payment plans, etc.) - <https://www.uttyler.edu/current-students/student-business-services/cashier-office/tuition-due/>
- UT Tyler Registrar's Office - <https://www.uttyler.edu/current-students/registrar/>
- Office of International Programs - <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/international-programs/>
- Title IX Reporting - <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/compliance/title-ix/>
- Patriots Engage (available to all students. Get engaged at UT Tyler - <https://uttyler.campuslabs.com/engage/>

[Student Resources](#)

[University Policies and Information](#)