

San José State University
School of Humanities and Arts
Department of English and Comparative Literature

English 129, Introduction to Career Writing

Instructor:	Mark Thompson
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Email:	mark.thompson@sjsu.edu
Office Hour:	M 11:00-12:00; and always by appointment
Class Days/Time:	T/TH 10:30–11:45
Classroom:	Sweeney Hall 229
Prerequisites:	Upper-division standing

Canvas

All course materials such as readings, syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. will be found on Canvas. I will also email you using Canvas. Make sure you are getting class emails. If there are any issues with your Canvas account, email me immediately.

The login site for Canvas is:

<https://sjsu.instructure.com/>

Use your standard SJSU login to access the class. We will cover basic login in class, but there are additional resources to learn Canvas here:

<http://guides.instructure.com/>

Course Description: An Introduction to Career Writing

Our purpose this term is to look at what sort of writing is getting published these days—and to start producing that writing ourselves.

What does “career writing” entail? For the purposes of this class, we are looking at the major genres of entry-level writing—writing that someone will be happy to pay you for. You will get experience writing in a bunch of new formats, develop the ability to shift in voice and style depending on your writing goals, AND build a professional writing portfolio to use for your job search.

In addition to learning about what to write and how to get it published, we will produce a publication of our own, the *English and Comparative Literature Department Newsletter*. You will write and produce a podcast. You will launch and update a blog, as well as code articles to be published on our class website. Working on these publications will not only give you hands-on experience in the publishing process, it will give you experience working as part of a team and taking on tasks which may be entirely new to you. Part of working as a successful writer involves learning skills as you go. You’ll get plenty of chances to do that in this class.

Three things:

- 1) This is NOT “English class” writing. The goal is to write things that other people WANT to read.
- 2) I’m not here to tell you what to write about, only to help you find a story, tell it to the best of your ability, and to try to find an audience for it.
- 3) The value of this class is producing a body of material that reflects your best efforts. A strong portfolio is crucial to finding work as a writer. Don’t half-ass it.

Department Goals

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- G1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric. (All reading assignments fulfill this.)
- G2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature. (While this is a nonfiction class, in-class writing exercises will draw upon examples from literary works to demonstrate effective

characterization, dialogue, setting, and use of detail.)

- G3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. (Every major assignment fulfills this goal.)
- G4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. (Feature article, EDNL article, Profile piece, and podcast script.)
- G5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. (Discussion of readings will always incorporate contextual discussions along comparative lines.)

Course Goals (Student Learning Objectives)

By the end of this class, you will be able to:

- Apply analytical tools that allow you to not only understand a piece of writing, but also to understand the professional contexts under which writing is currently published.
- Produce marketable writing within a genre of nonfiction writing that you are already experienced in, or on a topic that you are an expert in.
- Engage a genre of nonfiction writing or topic that you are unfamiliar with, and apply analytical tools towards the process of researching and writing with authority on unfamiliar topics.
- Assess, edit, and improve your own writing.
- Work professionally with other writers, both as an editor of other students' writing, and in the group production of a publication.

Required Reading/Texts

Your Classroom Tools for Exploring Career Writing: Canvas, Texts, Tech

Canvas. Because I'm sensitive to the amount of paper a writing/editing class can consume, this course will make extensive use of Canvas, an online classroom management tool. Your readings and assignments will be posted as .pdfs for you to download and print (as you see fit).

You will still need to bring the readings to class, in either print or digital form. I will give random pop quizzes throughout the semester to test whether you have brought your readings to class.

Additionally, I will use Canvas to communicate with you during the week, and will be returning drafts to you via email/Canvas.

I will also use Canvas to make your grades available to you throughout the semester, so you know where you stand at all times.

Every semester I seem to have a student or two who can't quite figure the technology out and just sits in silence staring at the floor all semester. If you are having any problems logging on to your account, please contact me! Your success in this class is dependent on this!

Texts. All readings for this class will be posted to Canvas. Such an arrangement allows us to stay current with what's going on in publishing, and also lets me tailor our readings to class interests. I expect you to have either paper or screen in front of you for classroom discussions.

The readings in this class are short and specifically chosen to highlight a particular aspect of engaging writing (setting, details, dialogue, etc.). I expect everyone to show up to class not only having read these short assignments, but also to have read and thought about the discussion questions before class. If you think the writing sucked, then you must articulate WHY you think it sucked, citing specific examples of suckiness. THIS IS NOT A LECTURE CLASS. We are analyzing writing to find ways to improve our own writing. Whether or not our class time is worthwhile is entirely dependent on how well you prepare.

Other equipment / tech requirements

In-class writing will be a major part of this class. You should either bring your own laptop or use one of the laptops available in the classroom.

Weekly Blogging: You will be creating and maintaining a blog at wordpress.com, and should have some sort of way to update your blog outside of class. Please come talk to me if you don't have access to a computer outside of class.

Major Written Assignments: Microsoft Word is still the industry standard for submitted articles. If your submission to a publication is unreadable, you will not be given a second chance. This being the case, I expect you to submit your articles in Word (.doc) format. I don't want .pdfs (unless I specifically request them). I certainly don't want .pages files. If you use other programs, export your work as a Word file. If I can't open your assignment, I won't grade your assignment. A free version of Microsoft Office for PCs and Macs can be found at: <http://its.sjsu.edu/services/software/microsoft-students/index.html>

As a SJSU student, you have free access to Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and InDesign, three major programs for media production. Download these and play around with them, especially if you want graphic/layout/web experience.

Adobe Creative Cloud: <http://its.sjsu.edu/services/software/adobe/index.html>

Course Requirements and Assignments

Main Assignments. You will complete the following assignments:

- Assignment #1: Copywriting
- Assignment #2: Interview/Profile
- Assignment #3: English Department Newsletter
- Assignment #4: Review
- Assignment #5: Feature Article
- Assignment #6: Podcast
- Assignment #7: Group Video Feature
- Assignment #8: Final Portfolio

Generally, all topics and genres are open to you, as long as you are writing something that someone else would want to read. Travel, sports, gaming, food, history, technology—you choose the kind of writing to be done, the subjects, the audiences, and your target publication. These assignments are intended to give you the opportunity to explore several of the subgenres of writing, so please feel free to take some risks.

To produce all of this within our limited timeframe, you will need to work on assignments simultaneously. Please study the attached schedule and plan your semester accordingly. It might also help if you could choose a central topic or focus; that way your research can be cumulative.

Readings. We will be reading work that is currently being published, as well as examples of the kinds of writing we'll be producing. You are expected to read EVERYTHING and come to class prepared to discuss each article. Additionally, these readings will provide the basis for graded in-class writing assignments. Failure to bring readings to class (in paper or digital form) will severely handicap you in these graded exercises.

Blog Posts. In this class we will each start a blog at wordpress.com. Generally, I will assign you a blog post on Tuesday that will be due on the following Thursday. If there is time left in class after our discussion, we'll use remaining class time to start writing. Once your writing is posted, you will submit the URL to me via Canvas. I will check each assignment for completion, and then holistically grade your blog at the end of the semester. There is no make-up for these assignments.

Peer Review of Blogs. Nobody wants to write in a vacuum. In addition to writing a weekly blog, you will be required to check out the blogs of other students and comment in the comments section. Just a sentence or two with some encouragement or a question. I use Canvas to randomly assign peer reviews through the Assignments section. Be sure to keep up with these.

Workshops. Sharing our writing with others and getting advice is a major aspect of this class. Professional writers are not only expected to produce quality writing, they are expected to give helpful advice to others. We will workshop a rough draft of each assignment. All workshops are mandatory and are listed on the schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments. If you fail to attend a workshop, you will not get any comments from me on your draft. This generally results in losing at least one letter grade.

Production Teams. For the *English Department Newsletter*, your podcast, and for the Team Video, you will be assigned a production team. These production teams are your opportunity to learn how a publication develops within professional collaborations AND are a good line to put on your resumes. You will be graded as to how well you complete your duties.

Discussion Teams. Because previous students have pointed out that getting stuck in a lousy discussion group limits what they get out of the class, I'll be assigning new seats each Tuesday to make sure that discussion stays lively. Your Thursday group will be the same as your Tuesday group.

Note: Though I have set aside time in class for some production activities and meetings, some of these activities will need to be conducted outside of class time.

The Final Portfolio. Your final portfolio will collect the writing you've done over the semester into a polished format that you will be able to use to apply for writing jobs. You will be graded on the quality and professionalism of the entire package.

Final Examination. Your final exam in this class will be the screening of your group's Video Feature where you will systematically explain how this video is a culmination of all the skills you have developed in this class. I will examine and assess your presentation to its finality while providing final assessment.

Grading Policy

I spend A LOT of time grading. All English professors do. Because of my workload, I can only comment so much on each assignment. That being said, your writing wouldn't improve very much if I just handed out letter grades. This is how I manage my workload:

Drafts: In assessing your rough drafts, I take the time to comment extensively on organization, style, transition between ideas, beginnings, endings—the important stuff. I don't correct typos or errors unless I see you consistently making mistakes that interfere with readability. In addition to commenting, I also score your rough drafts using the same rubric I use to grade your final draft.

Final Drafts: My commenting is limited if I comment at all. I compare your final draft against your rough draft, looking at how well you incorporated feedback and how much effort you put

into revising your work. My feedback at this stage is primarily reflected in the grading rubric. Look to where you missed out on points to see where you can improve.

This is my basic level of feedback. If I don't hear anything back from you, I assume you are happy with what you get from me. For those of you who want more feedback, I will enthusiastically talk with you about your paper for as long as you can stand it. Come early to class, stay after class, come to my office hours, set up an appointment with me. I am more than overjoyed to offer more feedback than you can handle; you just have to be the one to initiate it.

Relative Weights for Determining the Final Course Grade:

In-Class Blogging Assignments	10%
Production Work / Participation	5%
Assignment #1: Copywriting	10%
Assignment #2: Interview/Profile	10%
Assignment #3: English Department Newsletter	10%
Assignment #4: Review	10%
Assignment #5: Feature Article	10%
Assignment #6: Podcast	10%
Assignment #7: Group Video Feature	10%
Assignment #8: Final Portfolio	15%

Grading Criteria: The following paragraphs sum up my criteria for grading an essay. Assignments are assigned letter grades, from A+ to F.

An "A" is awarded to work that is consistently excellent, professional, and publishable.

A "B" is awarded to work that is consistently above average—and occasionally excellent. Despite some bright spots, a client or editor would probably pass it back for more editing.

A "C" is awarded to work that is developing. Though the potential is there, a client or editor would pass on this.

A "D" is awarded to work that is incomplete or way off the mark.

An "F" is generally awarded to work that is not turned in. This usually comes in the form of a zero.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

My Professional Policies

Workshops. Work completed in class cannot be made up. Workshops and presentations are an essential part of the writer's working experience. ***Your participation in all workshops is mandatory;*** I will not give any feedback to students who do not attend workshops.

Attendance. I guarantee that missing more than a few days will significantly affect your understanding of the material. Please notify me if you are unable to attend class. **DO NOT DISAPPEAR ON ME.** In the past, students who have vanished without explanation for more than three classes have failed this class. I am a human being. If you are experiencing an ongoing crisis, please let me know and we will come to some sort of arrangement. In-class writing due to absence cannot be made up. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you are expected to turn it in on Canvas regardless.

Lateness. It drives me insane when people are habitually late to class. If there is something that will make you late to class, whether reoccurring or not, please let me know.

Grading class participation. I expect everyone to participate in class. This means you are awake and engaged, having done the readings and the homework, are actively participating in discussion and are working constructively when we break into small groups. A participation grade allows me to reward those students who are actively engaged in each class, while being able to account for students who are routinely late, absent, sleepy, or engaged in non-class related activity during our brief time together. An "A" means always engaged, a "B" means mostly engaged. A "C" is sometimes engaged. A "D" means you stared at your phone the whole time.

Late work. I don't accept it. Part of being a writer is, though the Earth itself may be aflame, you meet your deadlines. All of them. I understand your life is complicated, with many responsibilities pulling you in multiple directions. If you are unable to attend on a day that an assignment is due, it is up to you to make sure that you get me your work by deadline.

Acting with academic integrity. In both your academic and professional careers, you are expected to act with integrity. You are in this class for more than a grade, you are here to emerge with actual skills—skills which are not developed through cheating. Though it most likely will not be an issue, any plagiarism will earn you an automatic "F" in my class. Yes. It's that serious. A writer who plagiarizes is the worst of the worst. If you have questions as to what is "borrowing" and what is stealing, let me know. Sometimes it can be a hazy line. Just do your own work.

Technology use. You should treat the classroom as a professional workspace. I encourage and require the use of tablets, laptops, and even phones—whatever you'd prefer to work on. Please, grab a computer from the caddy if you don't bring your own. This policy has worked fine for me in the past, but I realize the temptation to refresh your Twitter feed as we delve into the intricacies of dangling participles may be strong. Emailing, texting, and engaging in unrelated activities are discourteous and distracting to me and your classmates. I begin the semester assuming you are adults with adequate impulse control, and will continue to treat you as such until proven wrong. Please don't turn me into a technology cop. There is a reason I teach college instead of high school.

Food and beverages. You are allowed to bring food and beverages with you to class. If said food happens to be a home-cooked meal from your grandmother, please bring extra for your instructor. Also, I am particularly fond of Philz Coffee (no cream, no sugar) that hasn't been spit in.

My open door policy. I'm happy to talk with you at any time about the readings, assignments, and any other aspect of the course. Just talk to me after class, send me an email, or arrange to meet with me outside class. COME TO MY OFFICE HOURS! My highest compliments from students have always come from the one-on-one help I give outside of class. In addition to teaching, I've worked as a professional writer and editor for the past 20 years. Please don't make me take all of my experience with me to the grave!

Contacting me. Please use email to contact me (I don't check voice messages and I don't answer the phone if I'm busy). I generally respond to emails immediately. I check email at 10 am and 2 pm Monday-Thursday and 3pm on Fridays. So, don't expect a response from a panicked email sent at midnight about an assignment due the next day.

After this class. In addition to my assistance in this class, I extend to all my students an offer to help with any future writing issues which may arise once this class is over. In the past, I have assisted former students with cover letters, updated resumes, grad school applications, and have even helped with the abstract of a scientific paper. Additionally, for all students who receive an A in this class, I will happily write a letter of recommendation for any grants, schools, programs, or internships you may be applying to. Also, if you receive an A in this class, you may include me as a reference in any jobs you might apply to.

About 75% of my students ask me for some sort of advice or assistance after they leave my class. Let's make sure that we leave on good terms so that help is available to you.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management

skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

SJSU Counseling Services. The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

E129 / Career Writing, F2016 Course Schedule

Although the due dates for assignments are solid, the rest of this schedule is subject to change, and most likely will change. I will notify you of any changes to the schedule in class, via a new document. I will make sure that there is ample time for you to make any changes to your schedule that you might need to.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, In-Class Writing, Assignments	Due
1	Thurs 8/25	Introductions, Syllabus. ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 1 • Set up class blog • <i>Blogging—Short Professional Biography</i> 	
2	Tues 8/30	Copywriting, Pt. 1, Go over Assignment #1 ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 2 • <i>Blogging—Details</i> 	DUE: Link to <i>Blogging—Short Professional Biography</i>
	Thurs 9/1	Copywriting, Pt. 2 ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 3 • <i>Draft for Assignment #1</i> 	DUE: <i>Blogging—Details</i>
3	Tues 9/6	Copywriting, Pt. 3; Workshop Assignment #1 ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 4 • <i>Blogging—Interviewing</i> 	DUE: <i>Draft for Assignment #1</i>
	Thurs 9/8	Interviewing, Pt. 1 ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 5 • Finish Assignment #1 	DUE: <i>Blogging—Interviewing</i>
4	Tues 9/13	Interviewing, Pt. 2, Go over Assignment #2 ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 6 • <i>Blogging—Dialogue</i> 	DUE: Assignment #1
	Thurs 9/15	Writing Profiles ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 7 • <i>Draft Assignment #2</i> 	DUE: <i>Blogging—Dialogue</i>

	Thurs 10/20	<p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 16 • <i> Blogging—The Language of Reviews</i> <p>Writing Feature Articles</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 17 • Finish Assignment #4 	<p>Assignment #4</p> <p>DUE: <i> Blogging—The Language of Reviews</i></p>
10	Tues 10/25	<p>Clickbait!!!, Go over Assignment #5</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 18 • <i> Blogging—Outside Voices</i> 	DUE: Assignment #4
	Thurs 10/27	<p>The Workspace: How to Get Writing Gigs</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 19 • Draft Assignment #5 	DUE: <i> Blogging—Outside Voices</i>
11	Tues 11/1	<p>Editing for Concision</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 20 • <i> Blogging—Music and Memory</i> 	DUE: Draft of Assignment #5
	Thurs 11/3	<p>Digital Publishing, Discuss Podcast assignment</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcast Listening Assignment 	DUE: <i> Blogging—Music and Memory</i>
12	Tues 11/8	<p>Podcasts, Podcast brainstorming, Podcast listening</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 21 • Finish Assignment #5 	DUE: Podcast Listening Assignment
	Thurs 11/10	<p>Podcast workshop, Audio editing, Go over Assignment #6, Form groups</p> <p>ASSIGNMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Podcast. 	DUE: Assignment #5
13	Tues 11/15	<i>Group 1: Podcast Recording</i>	

	Thurs 11/17	<i>Group 2: Podcast Recording</i>	
14	Tues 11/22	A/V Lab Open for Use ASSIGNMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 22 	DUE: Assignment #6 (Sunday by Midnight)
	Thurs 11/24	Thanksgiving (No Class)	
15	Tues 11/29	Writing for Video, Go over Assignment #7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 23 	
	Thurs 12/1	Editing for Video <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 24 	
16	Tues 12/6	Team Production Meetings	DUE: Link to successfully set-up portfolio page.
	Thurs 12/8	Team Production Meetings. Last class, wrap up. Pizza. Chips. Dip. Fruit. Crying. Etc.	
Thurs 12/15 9:45 am		<i>ENGL 129—Film Festival!!!</i>	DUE: Assignment #8 Videos Assignment #9, Final Portfolio (Paper and Digital) 5:00 pm, box outside my office.