

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Fall 2025 Section 85 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 10/07/2025

Course: ENGL 1A: Section 85, First-Year Writing

Instructor: Michael Muszynski

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Office Location: Faculty Offices 115 (FOB 115)

Office Hours: In-person: Before class, 12-1 PM Tuesdays and Thursdays

Class Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Classroom: Dudley Moorhead Hall 226A (DMH 226A)

Contact Information

You can reach me through my email: michael.muszynski@sjsu.edu

Please feel free to communicate with me frequently. I love hearing from my students. It means they're thinking about class! If you learned something cool, let me know. If you are confused, let me know. If you have to miss class, let me know. I will be responsive and considerate. My priority is to help you succeed. Part of helping you succeed is being available. Send me an email or visit my office hours - it's my job! I try to respond to emails as quickly as possible, though I do have a life outside of class (shocking), so it can sometimes take me up to 48 hours to respond.

Course Information

English 1A is an introductory course that prepares students to join scholarly conversations across the university. Students develop reading skills, rhetorical sophistication, and writing styles that give form and coherence to complex ideas for various audiences, using a variety of genres. GE Area: A2

Prerequisite: Completion of Reflection on College Writing



Course Description and Requisites

English 1A is an introductory course that prepares students to join scholarly conversations across the university. Students develop reading skills, rhetorical sophistication, and writing styles that give form and coherence to complex ideas for various audiences, using a variety of genres.

Satisfies 1A. Written Communication I (Formerly Area A2).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Reflection on College Writing

Grading: Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Time Commitment: Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course-related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

ENGL 1A is a 3-unit course. That means we are signing up to do a minimum of 9 hours of study per week just for this class. 2½ hours will be class time. For the remaining 6½ hours a week, you will work independently or with your peers to prepare for class and complete reading and writing assignments.

Writing: Writing is at the heart of our class. Our exploration of writing will allow us to prepare ourselves and each other for academic and real-world writing scenarios. Assignments will give students repeated practice in all phases of the writing process: prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. Students in ENGL 1A must write at least 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form. That sounds like a lot, but the writing will build through multiple drafts of several assignments. Specific descriptions and instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas.

Reading: ENGL 1A is primarily a writing class, but reading is an important part of being a writer. While I encourage you to read on your own outside of class, there will be required readings throughout the semester; some will come from texts I select, and some will be from sources you find. We will also utilize videos and other multimedia texts to add insights about writing to our classroom.

Respect: Students are expected to respect the unique perspectives we bring to our classroom while engaging with peers and assignments. In class, discussion is welcome and encouraged, but comments found to be intentionally offensive, disrespectful, or combative will not be tolerated. Additionally, if anything in class causes you alarm for any reason, I encourage you to contact me directly and privately whenever possible.

Absences: If you miss a day of class, it happens. Your classwork and your grade are your responsibility. If assignments are due that day, you need to have arranged any possible extensions beforehand. Missing in-class work can result in losing participation points, which can negatively affect your grade.

Technology: For this course, you will always submit essays, reflections, etc. through Canvas. I don't accept hard copies of essays because I don't want to carry around or keep up with stacks of papers. If you don't have access to a computer, please see the technology desk at the library.

Restroom Breaks: Welcome to college. If you need to use the restroom at any point, there is no need to ask me. Please leave the classroom politely and quietly (for example, maybe not slamming the door) to avoid disrupting your fellow students.

Cell Phone Usage: If you need to use your cell phone to Google something, respond to a text, or pull up an assignment, you may do so. We are adults, we have other priorities, but please do not let it be a distraction to you or others in class. Please bring a laptop or notebook to work on in class, though. Please be respectful of your fellow students and me when it comes to your cell phone usage. You may step outside of class if you need to take a call. Although we'll be using technology often, please don't abuse my relatively lax policy on it by scrolling through Reddit, reading fanfiction, watching YouTube shorts, swiping on Tinder, etc. It's important that we're all present to have engaging discussions, and using technology for things like this during class will distract from that. Should technology become too distracting during class, we may need to revisit this policy

Food and Drink: Drinks are always fine (except for alcoholic beverages). If you need to eat a snack in class, that's fine, too, as long as you're not distracting others. Don't do the thing where you take five minutes to try to 'quietly' open a bag of chips. Just rip it open. However, please do not bring a full meal or order meals during class. You can show up late if you need to finish your meal somewhere else on campus. Please be respectful of other classes who will use our room and clean up your crumbs, spills, and other messes.

- SCCPHD has a link for potential vaccine access: [https://vax.sccgov.org/ \(https://vax.sccgov.org/?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGGRzdb6pInlRezjtpGag7teUw9PZU08xoh1zyt_JK4UHi2r_EccgwwHSPmAyGC3zLKHWPr6a-TNnMc0V2ultSD7IKfp-idTEaTGY2w7dwwCA\)](https://vax.sccgov.org/?mkt_tok=NjYzLVVLUS050TgAAAGGRzdb6pInlRezjtpGag7teUw9PZU08xoh1zyt_JK4UHi2r_EccgwwHS PmAyGC3zLKHWPr6a-TNnMc0V2ultSD7IKfp-idTEaTGY2w7dwwCA)). This site will help you determine whether you are currently eligible for a vaccine.

Please note: Masks are not required inside classrooms at this time. If anyone chooses to wear a mask while in class, their choice will be respected. If guidelines change and masks are required in class again, there will be a zero-tolerance policy for anyone who refuses to wear a mask.

If you test positive for COVID-19 during the semester, please contact me as soon as possible so we can make any necessary accommodations. The CDC recommends you remain home for at least 5 days until you test negative—these guidelines must be taken seriously.

AI/Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the process or practice of using another person's ideas or work and pretending that it is your own. The previous sentence is an example of plagiarism, since I simply copied and pasted the definition of plagiarism from the Cambridge Dictionary website without quoting or paraphrasing it. Overall, if you are going to use the writing or ideas of others, find a way to write them in your own words and/or

properly cite them for your readers to look into them further.

The university's current stance on the use of AI is as follows: "Submitting AI-generated work is categorically a violation of SJSU's academic integrity policy, which includes a definition of plagiarism as 'the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements.'"

However, we will be working with AI in this class. Specifically, we will be using generative AI (yes, like ChatGPT) and learning how to use it ethically (can it be used ethically?), investigating its role (or lack thereof) in academia, etc. But you will have advance notice of these assignments. It will be clear in the assignment instructions if you may use AI. By submitting AI work instead of your own writing, you are literally making the case that AI should do your job in the future. Don't replace your unique, human voice with an AI; otherwise, what is the point of you?

My general rule of thumb is that if you must ask yourself, "Am I plagiarizing by using AI?" or "Is this plagiarism?" you probably shouldn't do it. But please contact me or come to my office hours if you need help understanding plagiarism or are ever unsure if something is or isn't considered plagiarism.

Accommodations: If you need accommodation for your learning, please reach out to me. I will make adjustments to my own teaching practices to best help you. I will also refer you to other resources that can further aid your learning experience at SJSU.

Other Available SJSU Resources

The University provides all students with several resources to help us successfully learn in this course. The services provided include counseling and psychological care, mentoring and tutoring, access to food and housing, technology, and writing support.

Accessible Education Center

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Peer Connections

SJSU Cares

Spartan Food Pantry

Student Technology Resources

Writing Center

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area 1A: Written Communication I

Written Communication I courses cultivate an understanding of the writing process and the goals, dynamics, and genres of written communication, with special attention to the nature of writing at the university. A grade of C- or better designates that a student has successfully oriented reading and writing practice in English to support college level research and learning and to share learning with others. Area 1A is a prerequisite for Area 1B: Critical Thinking. Completion of Area 1A with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area 1A Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area 1A course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, context, effectiveness, and forms of written communication;
2. perform essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing);
3. articulate an awareness of and write according to the rhetorical features of texts, such as purpose, audience, context, and rhetorical appeals;
4. integrate their ideas and those of others by synthesizing, explaining, analyzing, developing, and criticizing ideas effectively in several genres; and
5. demonstrate college-level language use, clarity, and grammatical abilities in writing.

Writing requirement

Area 1A courses require a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

There is no book for this class; all readings will be provided as downloadable PDFs on Canvas.

Please bring your laptop or a notebook to every class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignment #1: *Media Critique Presentation*: Students bring in one good and one bad source (could be video essays, news clips, or articles) about a topic they might want to explore. They explain why one is credible and one isn't, focusing on source evaluation and bias. We will cover how to find visual aids and how to create presentations in Google Slides.

Assignment #2: *Anything Report*: Students choose any topic (current event, piece of media, personal experience) and write a 3–4 page explanatory essay. Must use at least two credible sources and show a clear organization.

Assignment #3: *I Believe Essay*: Students must state "I believe..." in their thesis and support it with logical, emotional, and ethical appeals. 4–5 pages.

Assignment #4 (Final): *Video Essay Adaptation*: Students adapt and revise a chosen earlier paper into a 4–6 min video essay, complete with script, visuals, and a list of sources. For those of you daunted by creating digital media, we will cover how to use Adobe apps in order to complete this assignment.

Assignment #5: *Reflection and Portfolio*: We will compile a portfolio at the end of the semester that includes selected examples of your writing produced for our class, as well as materials from your RCW Canvas course. We will talk more about the portfolio later in the semester.

Notebook: Your notebook will include your daily coursework on Canvas or in class. Your notebook can be a physical paper notebook or a Google Doc on your laptop. Keep your writing organized, and do not throw away or delete anything you work on for this class.

Free Writes: Most days, students will respond to prompts at the beginning of class to apply knowledge from the readings, brainstorm assignment ideas, or reflect on their experiences in class. Completing in-class free writes counts toward your participation grade.

Reading Responses: Students will reflect on what they learned, ask further discussion questions, or participate in activities from that week's readings (approx. 150-300 words each). Completing out-of-class reading responses counts toward your participation grade.

Notebook Checks: You will have a notebook check for each unit of our class. All I ask is for you to type up and send me three of your favorite notebook entries from that unit (free writes or reading responses). These entries should be 300 words each. For each entry, please provide the prompt you are responding to for free writing or the name of the text you are talking about for reading responses. The better you keep up with the free writes and reading responses inside and outside of class, the easier these notebook checks should be.

Grading Information

Late Policy: Excused late work is arranged by an extension; it can be counted for full credit, but unexcused late work appears out of nowhere without any notification to me. I will accept late work until the final day of class; the final score of unexcused late work will be bumped down a full letter grade. All assignments will be due at 11:59 PM on the due date. If there is any reason you cannot make a deadline for an assignment (because life happens), please let me know BEFORE THE DUE DATE, and we can arrange an extension. If an assignment's due date is changed, I will notify the class beforehand.

Grading Policy: If you have any questions about how an assignment is graded or what is expected of you, please contact me. Your grade will be determined by the points you meet in the different sections of each assignment's rubric. Our letter grade scale for all assignments is as follows.

A+ = (97-100%)

A = (94-96%)

A- = (90-93%)

B+ = (87-89%)

B = (84-86%)

B- = (80-83%)

C+ = (77-79%)

C = (74-76%)

C- = (70-73%)

D+ = (67-69%)

D = (64-66%)

D- = (60-63%)

F = (59% or less)

This is a process-based class where we will value your ability to engage in the writing process rather than only on the products you deliver to me. Ultimately, your grade comes down to this...

In general, you are guaranteed an A if you:

- Meet criteria and due dates for all MAIN assignments at a high level of quality;
- Complete all free writes and reading responses at a high level of engagement;
- Participate in class discussions and activities (engaging with other students, answering questions, sharing work in class);
- Give thoughtful peer feedback during workshops;
- Make substantive revisions when asked to revise (for example, extending points or changing thinking or organization of ideas, not just editing or touching up)

- Submit your final portfolio at a high level of quality.

You are guaranteed a B if you:

- Meet criteria and due dates for all MAIN assignments at a baseline level of quality;
- Complete most free writes and reading responses at a baseline level of engagement;
- Participate in class discussions and activities in class;
- Give decent peer feedback during workshops;
- Make substantive revisions when asked to revise (for example, extending points or changing thinking or organization of ideas, not just editing or touching up)
- Submit your final portfolio at a baseline level of quality

You are guaranteed a C if you:

- Meet criteria for and submit all major assignments at some point at a baseline level of quality;
- Complete more than half of the free writes and reading responses at a baseline level of engagement;
- Participate in exercises and activities in class;
- Participate in peer feedback during workshops to the best of your ability;
- Make some substantive revisions when asked to revise, not just editing or touching up
- Submit your final portfolio.

You are guaranteed a C- (the minimum passing grade to earn credit in this class) if you:

- Meet all the criteria of a C, but some of the work is at a level of quality that I judge to not be at a baseline level. You will not earn a passing grade in the class if the majority of the work is not turned in at all or not at a baseline level of quality.

Overall Grade: Your overall grade for the class will be based on the following percentages (or a total of 1000 possible points).

Assignment	Grade %	Word Count	Points	Learning Outcomes
Media Critique	7.5%	n/a	75	CLOs (2, 3, 4)
Anything Report	15%	2000	150	CLOs (2, 3, 4)
"I Believe" Essay	15%	2000	150	CLOs (2, 3, 4)
Video Adaptation	15%	1500	150	CLOs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Final Reflection	7.5%	500	75	CLOs (1, 5)
Notebook Checks	15%	1000	150	CLOs (1, 2)
Peer Review	15%	1000	150	CLOs (1, 2, 3, 4)
Participation	10%	n/a	100	CLOs (1, 2, 3, 4)
	100%	8000	1000	

Extra Credit: Many CLA events and Writing Center workshops are available on campus for you to participate in and learn about writing. I can't force you to attend these—however valuable they can be—I can offer you extra credit if you do attend them. My deal for you is if you attend one of these events and write a quick journal entry about what you learned (a couple of paragraphs), I will give you five points to be added to an assignment of your choice. For example, if you receive an 89 (B+) on your Media Critique, you can add the five points for a 94 (A). Extra credit can be added to submitted and graded assignments, meaning it cannot replace assignments. You may attend as many of these events as you wish, but you need to do a write-up for each.

List of Semester CLA Events and Writing Workshops with Dates on Canvas.

Another way to obtain extra credit is by applying for and participating in the Digital Literacy Showcase. This is an SJSU event sponsored by Adobe where first-year writing students present their in-class work using Adobe products. Students can earn five points for applying. We'll talk about this more in class!

Outside of extra credit, I do not round up grades.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: Media Presentation	THU AUG 21	Introductions, Syllabus, Community-Building
	TUE AUG 26	Media Analysis 1: Finding and Close-Reading Sources + Example Media Presentation READ: Rhetorical Analysis Handout (on Canvas)
	THU AUG 28	Media Analysis 2: Identifying Rhetoric (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) READ: Plagiarism: Understanding Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Citing (on Canvas) DUE: Presentation Topic Proposal
	TUE SEP 2	@Student Union Ballroom - [Jumpstarting Digital Literacy]
	THU SEP 4	Plagiarism, Paraphrasing, and ChatGPT DUE: Presentation Slides
	TUE SEP 9	Presentations Group 1
	THU SEP 11	Presentations Group 2
	TUE SEP 16	Presentations Group 3

UNIT TWO: Anything Report	THU SEP 18	In-Class Research Day: Anything Report + Sample Anything Report READ: Reading a Research Paper (on Canvas) & Reading Comprehension (on Canvas) DUE: Notebook Check 1
	TUE SEP 23	Reading Comprehension, Recognizing the Parts of a Research Paper READ: When and How to Use Social Media in Research (on Canvas)
	THU SEP 25	Selecting and Integrating Source Materials READ: Creating Reader-Friendly Papers and Essays (on Canvas)
	TUE SEP 30	Creating Reader-Friendly Papers and Essays READ: Creating Reader-Friendly Sentences DUE: Anything Report Rough Draft
	THU OCT 2	Creating Easy-to-Read Sentences and Paragraphs
	TUE OCT 7	Anything Report - Peer Review Day DUE: Peer Review 1
	THU OCT 9	Basic APA Style

UNIT THREE: "I Believe" Essay	TUE OCT 14	Deconstructing the Prompt + Sample "I Believe" Essay DUE: Anything Report Final Draft
	THU OCT 16	In-Class Research Day: "I Believe" Essay READ: Introductions (on Canvas)
	TUE OCT 21	Crafting Compelling Introductions and Conclusions READ: Body Paragraphs (on Canvas)
	THU OCT 23	Body Paragraphs READ: Academic Language (on Canvas) DUE: Notebook Check 2
	TUE OCT 28	Academic Language and Writing Concisely READ: Commas (on Canvas) DUE: "I Believe" Essay Rough Draft
	THU OCT 30	Common Grammar and Punctuation Errors
	TUE NOV 4	"I Believe" Essay - Peer Review Day DUE: Peer Review 2
	THU NOV 6	Revising and Polishing Your Writing

UNIT FOUR: Video Adaptation + Written Reflection	TUE NOV 11	NO CLASS [Veteran's Day, No Class] DUE: "I Believe" Essay Final Draft
	THU NOV 13	Revising for an Audience + Citing Various Media in APA Format
	TUE NOV 18	Making Visual Media Part One
	THU NOV 20	Making Visual Media Part Two DUE: Notebook Check 3
	TUE NOV 25	Video Essay In-Class Workshop
	THU NOV 27	NO CLASS [Thanksgiving Break]
	TUE DEC 2	Personal Narratives and Reflection Writing DUE: Video Essay Project
	THU DEC 4	Reflection Writing In-Class Workshop
	FINAL DEC 16 1:00-3:00	Video Essay Watch Party DUE: Written Reflection and Writing Portfolio