

Critical Thinking and Writing

ENGL 2

Spring 2026 Section 33 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 02/16/2026

Contact Information

David Koehn

david.koehn@sjsu.edu

Course Information

English 2 is a writing course that focuses on critical thinking, research, audience analysis and argument. Through the study of rhetorical, and professional texts, students will develop the habits of mind required to write argumentative, critical essays and multi-modal forms.

Course Description:

In this class, we build toward one powerful, research-driven argumentative paper through a scaffolded process that emphasizes rhetorical awareness, credible sourcing, and multimodal communication. Students will explore audience-first strategies using ethos, pathos, and logos to design and deliver a persuasive argument across multiple formats: a formal essay, a creative/multimodal piece (poster, podcast, video, demo, etc.), and a live presentation.

GE Area(s): A3

Prerequisite: Completion of Area A2 (Written Communication I) with a minimum grade of C- is a prerequisite for enrollment in Area A3.

We will critically examine how people encounter arguments in today's media-saturated world—including on TikTok, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and podcasts—drawing on recent research from Pew and legal commentary from the NYSBA and NPR. This media analysis will inform our understanding of why multimodal writing matters: how information circulates, how audiences respond to form as much as content, and how writers can adapt their arguments accordingly.

AI tools will also be introduced to assist in brainstorming, audience analysis, citation generation, and revision—ethically and transparently. This is an initiation into how we use the magic of AI as a tool to achieve our communication goals and avoid having AI replace our own writing, thinking, and agency.

Key Course Features:

- AI as writing support: Use Grammarly, ChatGPT, Claude, etc. transparently. No full generation of assignments. Cite your tools like sources.
- Agentic prose: Focus on active voice, clarity, and precision. We'll use *The Elements of Style* as our prose bible.
- Portfolio model: Students collect and reflect on their best work throughout the term.
- Modular grading: Success is defined by consistent effort, revision, and participation—not just single submission scores.
- Canvas as the hub: All discussions, reflections, and minor assignments submitted here.
- Nonfiction emphasis: We'll primarily use current articles (2023–2024) and contemporary media (TV/film) rather than long traditional texts.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Chat GPT)

What you should know about AI Platforms

Large language models, like Chat GPT, perform intensive mining, modeling, and memorization of vast stores of language data “scraped” from the internet. They have been trained to learn language patterns and to predict the most probable next word or sequence of words based on the context they receive. In other words, it imitates or mimics what humans have put on the internet (think about that for a minute). AI writing platforms have become savvy enough to write essays, create apps, help with excel, and nearly any conceivable writing situation that relies on linguistic patterns. In this class, we'll practice learning and thinking with them. ChatGPT, like all generative AI systems, is a tool. Tools are used by humans to accomplish specific tasks. Thinking of it that way helps unlock its potential, but also avoid its pitfalls.

OUR CLASS POLICY ON GENERATIVE AI

AI tools may be used in this course to support brainstorming, outlining, reviewing, and language polishing. When you use AI tools like ChatGPT, clearly state where and how in a footnote or endnote (e.g., “Used ChatGPT to generate outline structure”). Do not submit AI-generated full drafts—your voice matters. Violations will be handled per the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy.

Generative AI programs like ChatGPT and Grammarly can and should be used as resources in this class. As a writing community, we've decided that while they can be integrated into our writing process (brainstorming, generating and organizing ideas, polishing drafts, etc.), we should not use them to write our papers for us. Our work should represent our own ideas and our own ways of articulating them.

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university emphasizes responsible citizenship and an awareness of ethical choices inherent in human development. Academic honesty and fairness foster ethical standards for all those who rely on the integrity of the university, its courses, and its degrees. University degrees are compromised and the public is defrauded if faculty members or students knowingly or unwittingly allow dishonest acts to be rewarded academically. This policy sets the standards for such integrity and shall be used to inform students, faculty, and staff of the university's Academic Integrity Policy.

STUDENT ROLE

The San José State University Academic Integrity Policy requires that each student:

- know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times, including learning and abiding by rules associated with specific classes, exams, and course assignments;
- know the consequences of violating the Academic Integrity Policy;
- know the appeal rights and procedures to be followed in the event of an appeal;
- foster academic integrity among peers.
- You can access the SJSU's comprehensive academic integrity policy here:

<https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf>

Key Policies

- **Engagement:** Active participation is required; engagement will largely be measured by responses to peer work.
- **Late Work:** Late submissions will be accepted with a deduction of 5% per day (including weekends). The late penalty may be waived with prior notice or documented emergency. Please communicate with me as soon as possible if you anticipate difficulties meeting a deadline. Missing smaller assignments will have a limited impact on your overall grade, higher-value assignments carry significant weight and late submissions on these will more substantially affect your final course grade. See Canvas for a complete schedule of assignments and their respective point values.

Academic Integrity: All work must be your own; plagiarism will result in course failure. Refer to the SJSU integrity policy.

Course Description and Requisites

Focuses on the relationship between language and logic in composing arguments. Students learn various methods of effective reasoning and appropriate rhetorical strategies to help them invent, demonstrate, and express arguments clearly, logically, and persuasively.

Satisfies 1B. Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of GE Area 1A with a grade of C- or better.

Grading: Letter Graded

Note(s): ENGL 2 is not open to students who successfully completed ENGL 1B.

* Classroom Protocols

ENGL 2, Section 9 | Critical Thinking and Writing

Theme: Rhetoric and Writing as “The Power of Persuasion” from TikTok, to Podcasts, to Critical Writing and Communications

Location/Time: Boccardo Business Center 225 /Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM

Instructor: David Koehn

Email: david.koehn@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: by appointment | <https://calendar.app.google/A4dB28qM67ZueGMr7>

Course Dates: January 20, 2026–May 11, 2026

AI use is encouraged: Use the [SAID](#) (Student AI Disclosure) tool to document your AI use on assignments.

ENGL 2

This course is open to all students needing to fulfill GE Area 1B: Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3). It is not open to students who have successfully completed ENGL 1B.

Prerequisite: ENGL 1A or Stretch English (with a grade of C- or better)

Course Content

Diversity: SJSU studies include an emphasis on diversity. You will engage in integrated reading, Writing, and oral assignments to construct your own arguments on complex issues (such as diversity and ethnicity, class and social equality) that generate meaningful public debate. Readings for the course will include writers of different ethnicities, genders, and socio-economic classes.

Writing: In this class, we build toward one powerful, research-driven 6000-8000 word argumentative paper through a scaffolded process that emphasizes rhetorical awareness, credible sourcing, and multimodal communication. Students will explore audience-first strategies using ethos, pathos, and logos to design and deliver a persuasive argument across multiple formats: a formal essay, a

creative/multimodal piece (poster, podcast, video, demo, etc.), and a live presentation.

Logic: You will learn methods of argument analysis, both rhetorical and logical, that will allow you to identify logical structures (such as warrants, evidence, qualification, rebuttal; enthymemes and syllogisms) and distinguish common logical fallacies.

Reading: In addition to being writing intensive, ENGL 2 is also a reading course. You will read a variety of critical and argumentative texts to help develop your skills for understanding the logical structure of argumentative writing.

Oral: You will be presenting your arguments orally to class both as an individual and as part of a group.

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas Learning Management System course login website. You're responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see Canvas Student Resources page.

Time Commitment

Success in ENGL 2 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.

Final Examination or Evaluation

In ENGL 2, our learning culminates in a digital Reflection and Portfolio Assignment. In this assignment, we will gather samples of our writing that demonstrate our learning; we will write a reflection essay that explains what we have learned, how we learned it, and how we will use it in future learning; and we will submit our portfolio for consideration to other people in the first-year writing program. This is our chance to identify and articulate what we've learned and what we'll take forward with us into future learning/writing experiences.

Program Policies

First-Year Writing policies are listed at the following website:

<https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php>
(<https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php>).

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 1B: Critical Thinking and Writing

Area 1B courses develop students' understanding of the relationship of language to logic. By engaging students in complex issues requiring critical thinking and effective argumentation, 1B courses develop students' abilities to research and analyze important topics and to construct their own arguments on issues that generate meaningful public debate and deliberation. Courses include explicit instruction and practice in inductive and deductive reasoning as well as identification of formal and informal fallacies of language and thought. Completion of Area 1A (Written Communication I) with a minimum grade of C- is a prerequisite for enrollment in Area 1B. Completion of Area 1B with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area 1B Learning Outcomes

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

1. locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way, including through library research; and integrate research findings into oral and written arguments through appropriate citation and quotation;
2. use a range of rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view;
3. identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the contexts of arguments; and
4. use inductive and deductive logic to construct valid, evidence-supported arguments and draw valid conclusions.

Writing requirement

This class requires a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

Required Materials & Key Course Readings - with publicly available access

- Vos Savant, Marilyn. The Power of Logical Thinking. St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Barzun, Jacques. Simple and Direct. Harper Perennial, 2001.
- Strunk, William, and E. B. White. The Elements of Style. Longman, 2000.
- Access to Canvas and Google Drive
- Stable internet for video/media/article access
- Weekly readings (linked in schedule)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Weekly Schedule (Mapped to Dates) - Due Dates and Assignments in Canvas

Week	Focus	Deliverables
1	Intro to Rhetoric & Audience	Audience Profile
2	Logos & Logical Fallacies	Thesis Generator
3	Research & Source Credibility	Annotated Bibliography (AI ok)
4	Outlining & Argument Structure	Argument Map
5	Evidence & Reasoning	First Paragraphs Draft
6	Pathos, Emotional Appeal & Bias	Pathos Paragraph Expansion
7	Ethos, Credibility & Style	Peer Style Edit

8	Counterarguments & Refutation	Revised Outline
9	Draft Workshop	Full Rough Draft
10	Clarity, Revision & AI Editing	AI Revision Pass
11	Multimodal Composition	Multimodal Draft
12	Peer Feedback & Gallery Walk	Feedback Letters
13	Presentation Rehearsal	Practice Pitches
14	Final Presentations	Live Presentation
15	Course Wrap-up	Final Paper + Reflection Letter
16	Optional Revision Conferences	Optional Final Revisions

Major Assignments:

Final Research Essay

Develop a 4000-6000 word argumentative essay that takes a clear stance on a contemporary issue. Incorporate credible, peer-reviewed sources, and use rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) effectively. Your argument must be grounded in audience awareness and include at least one addressed counterargument. All sources must be cited in MLA format. Drafts will be reviewed and revised.

Annotated Bibliography

Gather 6–8 credible sources related to your research topic. For each, provide an MLA citation followed by a 100–150 word annotation explaining the source’s credibility, key points, and usefulness to your argument. AI tools may assist in summarization or citation formatting, but your evaluation must be original.

Multimodal Argument Project

Translate your argument into a creative format: options include a podcast, short video, visual poster, interactive demo, or song. Your goal is to effectively reach a new audience using rhetorical principles that match the medium. This project must be accompanied by a brief creator’s statement (250–300 words) explaining your design choices and intended audience impact.

Live Presentation

Prepare and deliver a 5-minute live presentation of your argument. Focus on clarity, persuasion, and tone. Visual aids are encouraged. Practice sessions will be held in advance. Presentations will be peer-reviewed.

Reflection Letter

Write a 500-1000 word reflective letter discussing your growth as a writer and thinker in this course. Describe how your use of rhetorical strategies, audience awareness, and AI tools evolved. Be specific about what you learned from peer feedback, revision, and each assignment.

✓ Grading Information

More detailed assignments and word counts and rubrics in Canvas

Assignment	Word Count	% of Course Grade
Participation / daily writing / in-class work / reflection	n/a	10%
Discussion boards / responses	2500	20%
Paying Attention (incl. process materials)	1500	15%
Connecting, Reflecting, Arguing (incl. process materials)	1500	15%
Multimodal Artifact (incl. process materials)	1500	15%
Presentation	n/a	10%
Portfolio	1000	15%

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

Location/Time: Boccardo Business Center 225 /Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM