

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

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

Course Information

This course introduces the techniques of collegiate English composition, emphasizing clear, effective writing and analytical reading. Students will learn to think critically about their own writing and will receive extensive support throughout the writing process. Areas of support will include close reading, textual analysis, finding and correctly incorporating credible, relevant source material, and acclimating to a college academic environment. Through personal narrative, informative writing, media analysis, and researched argument, students will learn to analyze rhetorical strategies, craft well-supported claims, and adapt their voice for different audiences and purposes.

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

Respectful Communication:

- Engage with classmates and the instructor in a respectful and courteous manner at all times
- Listen actively when others are speaking; do not interrupt or hold side conversations
- When sharing ideas or disagreeing with a point, do so thoughtfully and constructively, focusing on the idea rather than the individual
- Be compassionate; writing can be an incredibly vulnerable exercise; this class is a safe space to experiment with voice, style, and subject matter

Participation and Engagement:

- Contribute to class discussions by asking questions, offering insights, and responding thoughtfully to peers
- Attend in-class activities, peer review sessions, and group work with a willingness to collaborate and learn from others
- Avoid engaging in off-task activities, such as browsing unrelated websites, texting, or working on assignments from other classes

Use of Technology:

- Technology such as cellphones and laptops are allowed when used in manners productive to class activities but not when they act as a distraction
- If use of technology becomes a distraction to the student or to others, the instructor may ask that it be put away
- Headphones/AirPods are not permitted during class unless part of an approved activity
- Audio or video recording of class is not allowed without instructor permission
- If students require any form of technology as an accommodation, please inform the instructor to ensure it is supported appropriately

Use of AI:

This course emphasizes the development of the student's own writing and critical thinking skills as they prepare to succeed at the college level. To support those goals, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or similar programs is permitted only when used as a tool to support learning, not as a substitute for it.

Permitted Uses of AI:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Exploring possible outlines or organizational strategies
- Clarifying of grammar rules or citation guidelines (MLA)
- Receiving feedback and identifying areas of weakness (when receiving support in this manner, chat logs should be saved and submitted alongside the assignment)

Prohibited Uses of AI:

- Generating complete essays, paragraphs, or responses to class prompts
- Submitting AI-produced text as student work
- Relying on AI to perform the critical thinking, analysis, and source evaluation that this class is designed to teach

While AI can be a useful tool for brainstorming or checking work, it cannot replace the critical thinking and writing process. Misuse of AI both undermines the student's growth and constitutes academic dishonesty.

*Think of AI as a tutor. Although tutors support students throughout the writing process, they do not do the writing for the student.

Late work:

- Students who anticipate difficulty meeting an assignment deadline can be granted an extension provided that this request is made prior to the due date
- Assignments submitted late without prior communication will receive a 10% deduction from the total grade; the deduction will increase by an additional 10% for each passing week, up to a maximum of 50% total deduction
- Students experiencing unexpected emergencies or extenuating circumstances should reach out as soon as possible to discuss potential accommodations

Resubmissions:

- Major assignments may be revised and resubmitted for the possibility of a higher grade, provided the student first meets with the instructor during office hours to discuss the original submission and a plan for revision
- Any late work deductions applied to the original submission will still apply to the resubmission grade
- Resubmissions should demonstrate notable improvement in content, organization, and clarity, not just surface-level corrections

ENGL 1A Course Content

Diversity: SJSU is a diverse campus. As such, our course is designed to include an emphasis on a diverse range of voices and viewpoints. We will engage in integrated reading and writing assignments to construct our own arguments on complex issues that generate meaningful public discussions.

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 give students repeated practice in all phases of the writing process: prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. Our class requires a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form. More specific descriptions and instructions will be distributed for all major assignments in class.

Reading: There will be a substantial amount of reading for our class, some of which will come from texts I select (listed below) and some of which will be from sources you locate.

Final Experience: 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.

Time Commitment

Success in ENGL 1A 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 1A, 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.

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.

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 Goals

- Introduce students to college-level writing as a process of discovery, reflection, and growth
- Provide structured opportunities to practice writing across multiple genres

- Strengthen academic confidence by developing habits of respectful collaboration and active participation
- Encourage students to explore diverse perspectives and voices in order to broaden their own understanding and expression
- Support students in cultivating a writing voice that reflects their individuality and humanity while still demonstrating clarity and credibility
- Prepare students to carry forward the skills of critical thinking, analysis, and metacognition into future academic and professional writing tasks

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

They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing Fourth Edition by Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein (ISBN: 0393631672)

Everything's an Argument with Readings Seventh Edition by Andrea A. Lunsford et. al (ISBN: 1457698641)

*All readings will be provided through Canvas

Course Requirements and Assignments

***Major assignment (must turn in to pass the class)**

Learning Logs: Learning logs are a reflective journal meant to encourage students to actively process what they read, watch, or listen to. Instead of just absorbing information, they pause to summarize their understanding, connect it to their experiences, and consider new questions or directions for further inquiry. Logs should be a minimum of 100 words.

Discussion Posts: Students will respond to guiding questions that prompt them to think critically about the readings. They are expected to present their perspectives clearly and support their ideas with specific references to the text. In addition, students are required to respond to at least two other posts, using the opportunity to exchange insights and consider different perspectives. Responses should move beyond simple agreement or disagreement and should instead help further or challenge the ideas being presented. Discussion Posts should be a minimum of 200 words and responses a minimum of 50.

***Symbolism Narrative Essay:** Students will reflect on their own defining traits and select a symbol that embodies those same qualities. They will critically analyze the connection between themselves and the chosen symbol, providing evidence for how both embody the aforementioned traits. The goal of this assignment is to encourage self-reflection while practicing analytical thinking and clear, effective writing. Further details will be provided later during the class. The essay should be a minimum of 750 words.

***Media Analysis Essay:** Students will select a piece of media (advertisement, film scene, short-form video, etc.) and analyze the rhetorical strategies it uses to persuade its audience. The essay will identify the arguments being made, both explicitly and implicitly, and examine how rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) shape the message. Students will also evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetoric usage. The goal of this assignment is to develop skills in rhetorical analysis, critical thinking, and written argument by moving beyond "what" a piece of media says to explore "why" and "how" it communicates its message. Further details will be provided later during the class. The essay should be a minimum of 1000 words.

***Research Paper:** This multi-stage project asks students to investigate a controversial issue by researching and analyzing arguments from multiple perspectives. In Part 1 (Topic Proposal), students will select a controversy they feel relatively neutral about, explain why it interests them, and outline the key questions they hope to answer. In Part 2 (Annotated Bibliography), students will collect five credible sources and organize their entries to represent a logical argumentative structure: main argument, counterargument, rebuttal, and potential solutions. Each entry will include an MLA citation, a summary with a direct quote, and an evaluation of credibility. In Part 3 (Research Essay), students will use the skills learned throughout the

course to craft an argumentative essay that presents the students' ultimate stance on the topic while engaging with multiple perspectives. Further details will be provided later during the class. Part 1 should be a minimum of 300 words, Part 2 should be 1500 words, and Part 3 should be 1750 words.

***Final portfolio:** The final portfolio is a mandatory component of all SJSU first-year writing classes and serves as both a culmination of the semester's work and an assessment of students' growth as writers. Further details will be provided later during the class. The final portfolio self-reflection should be a minimum of 500 words.

✓ Grading Information

Grading: Each of your assignments will receive points. 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, 60% = D (700 total points possible)

* = Major assignment (must be submitted to pass the course)

**Assignment contains multiple parts that are graded independently

Assignment	Word Count	Points	Learning Outcomes
Participation (based on in-class activities)	n/a	52	1-5
Learning Logs (10x)	1000 total (100 min each)	50	1,4
Discussion Posts (7x)	2100 total (200 min each + 2 50 min peer replies)	98	1,3,4
Composition 1 – Symbolism Narrative Essay *	750	100	1,2,5
Composition 2 - Media Rhetoric Analytical Essay *	1000	100	1,2,3,5
Research Project * (Proposal + Annotated Bibliography + Essay)	3500 (250 + 1500 + 1750)	150	1–5
Final Portfolio (Reflection + Samples) *	500 min	50	1,5
Total	8850 words (min.)	600 points	—

Extra Credit opportunity will be provided at various points throughout the semester.

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

Week 1: W (8/20): Syllabus and Community Building

- HW: Become familiar with the course Canvas; Read Annotation guide + example

Week 2: M (8/25): Annotating/Talking to the text; Benefits of Active Notetaking

Introduce Learning Logs

- HW: Read "Brainstorming" and Peter Elbow "Excerpts on Freewriting"
 - Submit Learning Log 1

W (8/27): Freewriting practice; Benefits of Freewriting

Introduce Composition 1: Symbolism Narrative Essay

In-Class Writing Assignment: The "Me" That I See

- HW: Read Symbolism definition and examples
 - Submit Learning Log 2
 - Prepare 3 symbols you find relevant to yourself and why (Due 9/8)

Week 3: M (9/1): Labor Day - No Class

W (9/3): Digital Literacy workshop

- HW: Submit Learning Log 3

Week 4: M (9/8): Symbol Brainstorming Activity: Guess the Connection

- HW: Read "Outlining with a Purpose" + "Visual Mapping"
 - Submit Learning Log 4

W (9/10): Thesis Explained; In-class Brainstorming and Outlining for Comp 1

- HW: Read: "How to Develop a Working Thesis" + "Topic Sentences"

- Submit Learning Log 5
- Complete Comp 1 Outline

Week 5: M (9/15): Transitioning from Outline to First Draft; In-Class Drafting for Comp 1

- HW: Read: "Introductions" + "Conclusions"
 - Submit Learning Log 6

W (9/17): Introduction, Conclusion, and the Writing Process Explained; Connect the Dot Activity

- HW: Read "Peer Review" + "Giver's Gain"
 - Submit Learning Log 7
 - Bring Comp 1 First Draft for Peer Review

Week 6: M (9/22): Peer Review Day for Comp 1 - exchange drafts

Go over Peer Review Strategies and Tips

- HW: Submit Learning Log 8
 - Revised Draft based on peer feedback (Due: 9/29)

W (9/24): Introduce AI Writing Comparison Assignment; Expertise brainstorming

In-Class Writing Assignment: You're the Expert

- HW: Read "AI Writing in Academics" + "AI Prompt Engineering"
 - Submit Learning Log 9

Week 7: M (9/29): Self-Reflection for Comp 1 - How was the process?

Discuss AI Support for Writing: Can it be used responsibly?

- HW: Select a topic that you consider yourself highly knowledgeable in
 - Using an AI Language Model of your choice, generate a response to the AI writing prompt with your desired topic
 - Bring AI Response to class
 - Read *They Say / I Say* Ch. 1 "They Say"

W (10/1): AI Response Peer Review Exercise; Identifying Main Points

Introduce Reader Response Discussion Posts

- HW: Read TSIS Ch. 2 "Her Point Is: The Art of Summarizing"
 - Submit Learning Log 10 (reflect on AI-generated draft)
 - Submit responses to Discussion Post 1

Week 8: M (10/6): How to find credible sources and evaluate them

- HW: Read TSIS Ch. 3 "As He Himself Puts It: The Art of Quoting"
 - Evaluate 2+ credible sources and summarize their main idea

- Highlight areas within the source that can be used as quotes
- Submit Final Draft of Comp 1 based on Feedback (due 10/13)

W (10/8): Workshop: Integrating quotes

- HW: Read TSIS Ch. 8 "Connecting the Parts"
 - Submit responses to Discussion Post 2

Week 9: M (10/13): Workshop: Transitioning between points

Introduce Research Project

- HW: Read TSIS Ch. 9 "You Mean I Can Just Say It That Way?"
 - Brainstorm topics for Research Project

W (10/15): Workshop: Research Project Topic Proposal

- HW: Read TSIS Ch. 10 "But Don't Get Me Wrong": The Art of Metacommentary
 - Submit responses to Discussion Post 3
 - Submit Research Project Topic Proposal

Week 10: M (10/20): Introduce Composition 2: Media Analysis Essay

Media Rhetoric Examples

- HW: Read *Everything's an Argument* Ch. 2: "Arguments Based on Emotion: Pathos"

W (10/22): Pathos in Media

- HW; Read EnA Ch. 3: "Arguments Based on Character: Ethos"
 - Submit Responses to Discussion Post 4

Week 11: M (10/27): Ethos in Media

- HW: Read EnA Ch. 4: "Arguments Based on Facts and Reason: Logos"

W (10/29): Logos in Media

- HW: Read EnA Ch. 5: "Fallacies of Arguments"
 - Submit Responses to Discussion Post 5

Week 12: M (11/3): Fallacies Exercise

- HW: Read Ena Ch. 6: 'Rhetorical Analysis

W (11/5): Media Rhetoric Analysis Group Activity

- HW: Read EnA Ch. 14: "Visual Rhetoric"
 - Submit Responses to Discussion Post 6
 - Create Outline for Comp 3

Week 13: M (11/10): Comp 2 Workshop: Drafting

- HW: Read EnA Ch.13 "Style in Arguments"
 - Bring Comp 3 First Draft for Peer Review

W (11/12): Comp 2 Peer Review Day - exchange drafts

- HW: Read EnA Ch. 7: "Structuring Arguments"
 - Submit Responses to Discussion Post 6
 - Revised Draft based on peer feedback (Due 11/19)

Week 14: M (11/17): Research Project Workshop - Finding sources

- Find 2 sources for Research Project (Due 11/19)

W (11/19): Annotated Bibliography Annotations Explained

- HW: Read EnA Ch. 12 "Proposals"
 - Make annotations for 3 sources

Week 15: M (11/24): Self-Reflection for Comp 2

Research Paper Workshop: Counterarguments and Rebuttals

- HW: Annotated Bibliography (Due 12/1)
 - Submit Comp 2 Final Draft (Due 12/3)

W (11/26): Thanksgiving's Eve - No Class

Week 16: M (12/1): Research Project Workshop: Reflection

- HW: Reflection (Due 12/8)

W (12/3): Research Project Workshop: Reflection

Introduce Research Portfolio

- HW: Submit Revised Annotated Bibliography (Due on Finals Day)

Week 17: M (12/8): Final Day of Class - Anything Workshop

- Final Exam: Research Portfolio (Due on Finals Day)