

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Fall 2025 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 10/05/2025

Course Information

Class Time/Location

MW 3-4:15 PM IN-PERSON
Hugh Gillis Hall Room 120

Office Hours

I hold scheduled office hours for 2 hours every week, on **Monday right before our class from 12:30pm-2:30pm**. They will be held in **Faculty Office Building Room 116**. I also have a [Zoom](https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88248261692) (<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88248261692>), open for those who'd rather meet virtually—just let me know when you'll be joining. If that day and time doesn't work for you, email me to set up a one-on-one meeting.

[Office Hours Zoom \(https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88248261692\)](https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88248261692)

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

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: 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.

Extensions and Late Work

- My policies are designed to encourage you to seek an extension, or turn in work late, rather than not submit anything at all. However, this course is fast-paced, and you will find it easier on yourself (and make it much easier on me) if you can keep on track with the due dates that I have set.
- I do allow extensions on major assignments. **If you need an extension, email me at least 24 hours before the set due date. Make it clear you are asking for an extension and include the new day/time you will have the paper turned in by. You do not need to provide details about why you need an extension.**
- If you do not request an extension, you can still submit major assignments late, but will be docked one letter grade for each day they are late, down to a minimum of a D- (60%).
- In-class assignments cannot be made up as the result of an absence and will receive a 0. If you are absent on a day when I've assigned you to bring writing to class for peer review, you can make up the missed assignment by arranging an asynchronous peer review session.
- I will not accept late work submitted after December 12th at 11:59pm.

Canvas 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>)

OUR CLASS POLICY RE: CHATGPT AND OTHER GENERATIVE AI:

Although AI can't do every job, it's now being used in practically every field of work. LLMs (Large Language Models) and AI chatbots offer new ways of generating writing—these models are trained on vast amounts of Internet text and designed to output writing that *seems like* it could have been written by a human. We'll be *critically* (!!)engaging with generative AI in this class as a means of assistive technology. By experimenting with and getting to know the limitations and affordances of AI, we can become smarter and more conscious about our use of these products.

One of our course goals is to help you learn to write and communicate effectively, which requires practice. So (super exciting!) you have to learn how to create, revise, and recognize high-quality writing yourself. I already know that ChatGPT can produce a C-grade essay in an instant. Academic and career success requires something more—*writing that demonstrates human labor and critical thinking*. We will discuss ethical and supplementary uses of AI, and ultimately you will be responsible for all final submissions, including limitations or potential biases from LLMs. You will also be responsible for disclosing when and how you used AI.

Misusing AI (like using it to write an essay without your own significant contributions or revision) or failing to disclose the use of AI will result in consequences ranging from a written/verbal warning to failing the assignment or course and a report to the Student Conduct Board. If you are unsure, ask! Honesty will be responded to with grace.

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

1. 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;
2. know the consequences of violating the Academic Integrity Policy;
3. know the appeal rights and procedures to be followed in the event of an appeal;
4. 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) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf>).

AI Disclosure Agreement

If you use AI to assist you, you must disclose how and how much you used AI in your writing process. Below are samples of how you can disclose your use of AI tools. We will discuss specifics of using and citing AI in class.

- I did all of this work on my own without assistance from tools, technology, or AI.
- I did the first draft but then asked AI paraphrase/grammar/plagiarism software to read it and make suggestions.
 - I made the following changes after this help:
 - Fixed spelling and grammar
 - Changed the structure or order
 - Rewrote entire sentences/paragraphs

- I used AI to help me generate ideas. (Describe that process.)
- I used AI to do an outline/first draft, which I then edited. (Describe the nature of your contributions.)

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

All readings will be made available on Canvas under the weekly modules.

Please bring a personal device (laptop, tablet) as well as paper/pen to class every day.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Over the course of this semester, we will develop our thinking, reading, and writing practices, focusing on our own experiences of literacy, language, and culture. As college students with new and challenging responsibilities, our classroom will be a space to confront our fears about writing and the obstacles that can prevent us from achieving our academic goals. Therefore, this class's minor and major assignments will ask you to identify and think through your and others' connections to language, rather than just crank out grammatically and logically 'correct' pieces of writing that I grade and hand back.

In each minor and major assignment, we will be working through the conventions of a specific genre for a specific audience. We will regularly check in and workshop our major assignments in the weeks leading up to the final due date. This can and will involve outlining, drafting, peer revision, scholarly writing, research, and oral presentation.

Final: There is no scheduled final exam for this class. Instead, you will write a final self-reflection essay in which you make an argument about the progress you've made as a reader and writer over the semester. There will also be a portfolio (details to come).

Participation: We will be conducting in-class activities, including warm-up activities in the beginning of each class, which will count towards your final grade. Participation points cannot be made up as the result of an absence. If you are absent on a day when I've assigned you to bring writing to class for peer review, you can make up the missed participation grade by arranging an asynchronous peer review session.

Weekly Reading Responses: When I assign reading, you will be responsible for submitting a brief reflection (approx. 200 words) on that week's texts under the appropriate Discussion on Canvas. These will be due by the end of the day on Mondays and provide a foundation for our discussion in class that week. There won't be reading responses when we don't have class/reading that week, or when there is a final submission due.

Unit 1: Personal Literacy Narrative

Reflective Essay on Digital Literacy and Social Media

Write a 1500-word narrative essay that reflects on an experience you've had related to social media or digital communication (e.g., learning to navigate misinformation, creating content, or engaging in online discourse). Use vivid sensory language, specific details about media habits/usage, and knowledge of class materials to develop a cohesive narrative of your digital literacy journey.

1. **Experience Selection and Proposal:** Write a 250-word proposal identifying a pivotal digital literacy experience related to social media or online communication that you want to reflect on.
2. **First Draft with Reflection:** Submit a 750–1000-word draft describing the experience with vivid details and reflections on its impact. Include a 150-word reflection on your drafting process + AI statement.
3. **Peer Feedback and Revisions:** Participate in peer review, providing and receiving feedback to refine your essay. Submit a 100-word response summarizing how feedback influenced your revisions.
4. **Final Essay and Learning Reflection:** Revise and expand your draft into a polished 1500-word essay with detailed descriptions and reflections on personal experience and course materials. In addition, submit a 200-word reflection on what you learned about your writing and digital literacy journey throughout the assignment + AI statement.

Due Dates:

- Proposal: September 3rd at 11:59 PM
- Draft: September 17th at 3:00 PM (before class)
- Peer Review: September 17th (in class)
- Final Essay: October 1st at 11:59 PM

The assignment emphasizes process, reflection, and critical thinking, helping you develop a deeper understanding of your digital literacy journey.

Unit 2: Comparative Rhetorical Analysis and Synthesis

Critical Themes in Contemporary Documentary, Music Video, and Video Games

In this assignment, you will analyze how two media texts—from a curated list of short documentaries, music videos, or video games—use rhetorical strategies to explore a shared critical theme. Through a scaffolded, process-based approach, you will develop **either a 1500-word essay or an 8–10 minute video essay (with written script)** in multiple stages.

1. Guided Media and Theme Selection (250 words):

Choose **two media texts from different genres** (e.g., one documentary and one music video) from the provided list. In your 250-word proposal, identify:

1. **The two texts you've chosen and the shared theme(s) they explore (e.g., identity, activism, memory).**
2. What interests you about these texts.
3. What connections or contrasts you anticipate analyzing.

2. Preliminary Annotated Bibliography (300-500 words):

Find **3–5 academic or credible sources** related to the critical theme(s) in your chosen media.

These may include scholarly articles, credible websites, book chapters, or interviews with creators. For each source, provide:

1. A proper MLA citation.
 2. A 2–3 sentence summary of the source's main argument.
 3. A brief explanation of how the source connects to your analysis.
 4. A short evaluation of the source's credibility (author, publisher, date, etc.).
3. **Full Rough Draft and Peer Review (1000–1200 words for essay writers, or full storyboard/script for video essayists):**
- Expand your project into a complete comparative analysis draft. Bring a draft to peer review for in-class feedback and submit a **100-word reflection** afterward describing how you will revise your work based on the comments you receive.
4. **Final Essay and Reflection:** Choose **one of the following formats** for your final submission:
1. **Option A: Written Essay (1500 words)**
 1. A typed comparative rhetorical analysis properly formatted in MLA style.
 2. Integrate textual and visual evidence from your chosen media and secondary sources.
 3. Include a Works Cited page.
 4. Accompany your submission with a 200-word reflection on what you learned during the assignment process.
 2. **Option B: Video Essay (8–10 minutes)**
 1. A scripted and edited video analysis comparing your two media texts.
 2. Incorporate spoken commentary, visual examples, and sound design to support your argument.
 3. Cite sources on-screen or in end credits (fair use guidelines apply).
 4. Submit both the video file or link and your full written script.
 5. Include a 200-word written reflection explaining your design and rhetorical choices and what you learned from producing your analysis.

Due Dates:

- Proposal: October 15th at 11:59 PM
- Outline: October 29th at 11:59 PM
- Partial Draft: November 12th at 3:00 PM
- Peer Review: November 12th (in class)
- Final Essay: November 21st at 11:59 PM

This assignment develops critical thinking, analysis, and writing skills while engaging with creative media.

Unit 3: Reflective Essay on Writing Process

Meditation on our Semester - Reflective Argumentation on Writing Development

Write a **1000-word reflective essay** analyzing how your writing practices have developed over the course of this semester. Reflect on specific assignments, experiences, or moments that shaped your growth as a writer. Consider how your understanding of the writing process—such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, or incorporating feedback—has changed. Use specific examples from your own work and writing experiences to illustrate your progress. Use at least two outside sources (one from class, one you find on your own) to support your argument about what makes an effective writing process.

You might draw on various forms of (re)presenting and remixing information (ex: photographs, digital art, infographics, music, performance). Finally, outline how you will apply what you've learned to future writing tasks in academic, personal, or professional contexts.

I will update with more specific details as we near the end of the semester.

✓ Grading Information

In this class, we will work as a learning community to develop our approaches to reading and writing different types of texts. We will experiment with unfamiliar strategies, and at times we will feel unsure about the direction of our work and our comprehension of the work of others. We will develop writing processes to help us, including prewriting, drafting, workshopping, and revising. We will rely on each other for feedback and support, but we will also take charge of our own learning and success. What does that mean in terms of grading?

We will not be using a traditional grading system. Instead, we will use "labor-based" or "contract" grading, meaning that you will receive a base-level grade based on our agreed-upon standards of satisfactory time and effort spent.

Participation assignments are collected in class; you can get 100% in this category just by showing up on-time and prepared for writing check-ins, discussion, peer review, group work, or whatever we're doing that day. **Note: Participation assignments cannot be made up as the result of an absence. If you are absent on a day when I've assigned you to bring writing to class for peer review, you can make up the missed assignment by arranging an asynchronous peer review session.**

Each week's discussion post will receive 100% as long as it responds to the prompt and is submitted on time. You can still receive 75% for a late or partial response. Missing discussion posts will get 50%. Your lowest discussion post score will be dropped and will not count towards your final grade (in other words, you can miss one response at any time, for any reason, and you won't be penalized).

Notice that process papers (outlines, drafts, revisions) are worth 30% of the final grade. All Process components will be graded based on our labor standards, rather than quality. This is intentional so that we put more effort into revision, iterating on components of the essay, rather than worrying about one big final grade.

You can earn a 60% (D-) on final submissions just by turning them into Canvas on time. Final submissions that are not turned in will receive an F (50%).

I'll share more details about process and final submission grading standards elsewhere.

Breakdown

Assignments	Word Count	Percentage of Overall Grade	Learning Outcomes
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Digital Literacy Narrative Essay	1500	15%	1-5
Rhetorical Analysis Essay	1500	15%	1-5
Reflective Process Essay + Portfolio	1000	10%	2, 4, 5
Process Work (Proposal, Outline, Drafts, Peer Review)	2000+	30%	1-4
Reading Responses	2000+	20%	1, 3
Participation	n/a	10%	1-4
Final Grade	8000+	100	

A (93-100); A- (90-92);
 B+ (88-89); B (83-87); B- (80-82);
 C+ (78-79); C (73-77); C- (70-72);
 D+ (68-69); D (63-67); D- (60-62);
 F (<60)

You need a C- or higher to receive GE credit for Eng1A.

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

My loose plan for the weekly structure of this course:

- On Mondays: writing check-ins, brief lecture-style presentations, recap/reaction/discussion of readings (if there are any), writing activities
- Weekly reading responses are due on Canvas by 11:59pm on Mondays.
- On Wednesdays: reviewing assignment prompts, workshopping drafts, conducting peer review, reading/writing/viewing source materials, community building, participation and process assignments
- Final Essay submissions are due on Canvas by the end of the day on Wednesdays.