

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Fall 2025 Section 06 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/15/2025

Course Information

Welcome to English 1A: First Year Writing! My name is Jordan Zachary Ellis, and I will be your instructor for this course. Much like yourselves, I am a student of writing here at San Jose State University, specifically I am in our Creative Writing Graduate Program with a focus in Poetry and a secondary focus in Fiction. I love writing, I have ever since I was a little kid and my parents would read me the rhymes in Dr. Seuss books. While I do not expect any of you to discover this same level of passion for writing, although you are definitely encouraged to, I do hope to make the process of writing at least a little less daunting and maybe slightly more enjoyable for each of you. At the same time, it is my intention to not only make this process less stressful but to also help you develop the writing skills you already have to give each of you the tools to write at the collegiate level. Every single one of you has the ability to write, I am simply here to help you hone those abilities that you already possess.

As Miyamoto Musashi wrote in his book, *The Book Of Five Rings*, "In any case, as human beings, it is essential for each of us to cultivate and polish our individual path." One fundamental way we can cultivate our individual path is by learning how to express ourselves through writing. This course is dedicated to making the process behind that just a little bit less scary and, hopefully, just a bit easier to understand.

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. GE Area: A2

Prerequisite: Completion of Reflection on College Writing

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: 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

GE Area A2: Written Communication

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 C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area A2 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area A2 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 Practice: Students will write a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs):

GE Area A2: Written Communication

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 C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area A2 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area A2 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 Practice: Students will write a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

There is only one book required for this course: *How We Write: Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Blank Page* edited by Suzanne Conklin Akbari (ISBN 9780692519332). While I will be able to provide a pdf for this text, you may want a physical copy of the book, and to that end I have found it online for around twenty dollars. Outside of that book, we will be using Canvas and the internet as our primary material for this course. All readings, outside of *How We Write*, that are assigned will be available through a link both in this syllabus and in each individual discussion board relevant to that particular reading. Likewise, all homework assignments, rough drafts, final drafts, as well as any and all class activities, will be submitted online through Canvas. This means that access to either a laptop or a smartphone will be essential to passing this course. If you come to class without a laptop or phone, you are expected to bring materials to hand write your daily prompt responses and class activities with and will then be expected to type them out and submit them online after class. If there are any questions or concerns about this, please reach out to me so that we may work together to find a solution.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Daily Prompts

Welcome Writing Prompt

At the beginning of each class we will be responding to a short writing prompt in this discussion board. Alongside posting your own Welcome Writing Prompt response, you must also respond to one other classmate's post. Please be respectful of one another and the vulnerability of commenting on each other's writing, we can share our thoughts without insulting one another.

For each Welcome Writing Prompt, you should have one post containing your own response to the prompt and one comment responding to a classmate's post. That means you should have two posts and two comments each week. There is no word count or requirement for these, my only expectation for this is that you respond in full sentences.

P.O.P. Activities

You are probably wondering how participation is going to be accounted for, and that is what the Proof Of Participation (P.O.P.) Activities discussion board is for! Almost every class session, if not literally every class session, you will be doing some form of writing activity during class. In this discussion board, you will be typing out those activities (or copy and pasting them from your own word documents) as proof that you did them. For group activities, only one person needs to post the actual activity response in the discussion board, however the other members of the group must also comment with the names of each group mate to make sure that everyone gets credit within Canvas.

You are not required to comment on each other's P.O.P. Activities, however you are more than welcome to. Please be respectful of each other, we can share our thoughts with one another and not insult or attack each other. More details about the expectations of individual activities and prompts will be given in class when the activities/prompts actually happen.

Weekly Prompts

Reading and Responses

Due Tuesdays by Midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas)

These readings are *not* meant to be intensive readings. I am not expecting you to dive into these articles and break them down too deeply. They are meant to supplement the topics and ideas we discuss and practice in class. For the responses, all I am expecting is a typed out response of around 100 words in which you discuss your thoughts about the article. I am being intentionally vague about this, you can respond to any aspect of the article in any way you see fit. I want to see that you read and engaged with the article in some way. Tell me how this reading connects with you and your own life in some way. The focus here is to express your thoughts through writing in an academic setting, but these responses are about *your* thoughts on these readings. You must also comment on at least one classmate's response each week. I am not placing a word count on these comments but please try and leave at least two sentences that authentically address your classmate's response in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Requirements:

- Response must be at least 200 words
- Response must directly address the reading
- Response must directly address your thoughts or reactions to the reading
- Must comment on at least one other classmate's response each week. Be thoughtful and respectful of your peers and their own thoughts/experiences.

Literacy Narratives

Due Thursdays by Midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas):

A literacy narrative is a way in which a person is able to express their experiences and journey with reading and writing in a unique way. Nine times throughout the semester, much like your Reading and Responses, you will be asked to write a short Literacy Narrative of about 175 words. What will make your Literacy Narratives unique is that you will be using music to express them. Personally, I love music, I listen to it while I write constantly, and it plays a major role in my own journey with reading and writing. What you will do is find a song that seems to fit with how your experience with reading and writing is when you write them. You cannot use the same song twice. While the songs you choose do not have to be "family friendly," your Literacy Narratives do; it is possible to express thoughts and experiences that are not family-friendly while using language that is appropriate for an academic setting and I will gladly support you if you need help learning to do so. I want to know what the song title is as well as who the artist(or artists) is(are). I want to know what your experiences with reading and writing are and how the song is connected to them.

Reading and writing is about a journey, and this is a space for you to be able to have some fun and express that journey. If you find yourself struggling to reach the word limit, do not be scared to write a second song and have a week with two songs instead of one. The point here is to look at your own experience with literacy in a new way and express it in an academic setting. The final project of the semester will involve each of these Literacy Narratives that you write, and will involve having to cite your sources, so try to pick songs that you are able to find the publishing information for.

Requirements:

- Each response must be at least 200 words
- Must pick at least one(up to two) songs per narrative and be able to articulate what the song title is and who wrote or performs the song in the recording.
- Describe your current thoughts and experiences with reading and writing.
- Describe how the song relates to those thoughts/experiences.
- Each narrative must be given a creative and original title

How I Write Reflections

Due Sundays by Midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas):

Every single week you will be asked to read an essay from the book, *How We Write: Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Blank Page* edited by Suzanne Conklin Akbari. These essays are personal narratives in which the author discusses their own writing practices and techniques. While these essays are *not* meant to define a “right” or “wrong” way to go about the act of writing, they are meant to let you see how different academics go about the process of writing in their own personal lives. This assignment will consist of three parts: First, I want you to read the essay assigned for that week in the syllabus. Second, I want you to summarize the essay in one to five sentences. Just give a brief explanation of what the essay was about, I am not expecting any kind of deep analysis here. The third part is the actual writing assignment: I want you to write a reflection about how this week’s essay relates to your own writing experience. These should be around 100 words or so each, and they should reflect what these essays have you thinking about in regards to your own writing. What questions are they making you ask, what answers are they giving you, what new practices are they making you look at in terms of writing? My expectations for these responses are simply that you are thinking about the process of writing and addressing how you are personally looking at it.

Requirements:

- Each response is at least 200 words long
- Each response has a brief(1-5 sentence) summary of the essay
- Each response has a personal reflection about how the essay relates to your own writing process or experience.
- Each reflection should be given a creative and unique title

Four Big Writing Projects

Astrology Essay

Rough Draft due September 12, Final Draft due September 26; both by midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas)

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1000(or more) word essay in which you will take a look at your own astrological sign and see how its traits relate to your academic pursuits.

Person of Interest Essay

Rough Draft due October 17, Final Draft due October 31; both by midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas)

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1500(or more) word essay in which you will research a person who inspires you and use the actual research to support what makes them an inspiring person.

How I Write Personal Essay

Rough Draft due November 21, Final Draft due December 11; both by midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas)

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this class. This will be a 500(or more) word reflective essay based on the readings from *How We Write*. This will be the essay that you submit for your Reflection Portfolio at the end of the semester.

Literacy Playlist

Rough Draft due November 28, Final Draft due December 12; both by midnight(technically 11:59PM on Canvas)

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1500(or more) word writing project based on the Literacy Narratives you have written throughout the semester.

Reflection Portfolio

Later in the semester, around November, you will be given a separate Canvas course in addition to this one in which you will be submitting a Reflection Portfolio on your experience this semester in English 1A. This will involve three tasks, consisting of two short surveys and a portfolio that has three components in itself: a 500-600 word self-reflection on your progress and growth from the beginning of this semester to the end, your final writing project in my class(the How I Write Personal Essay), and the Critical Essay you wrote for *Reflection on College Writing* over summer. We will go over this in greater detail later in the semester when the Canvas course for the Portfolio is opened.

✓ Grading Information

These grading guarantees are tentative, meaning that they are subject to change. As the semester goes on we may find that we need to come back to this and revise it as a class. If this comes up, we will sit down as a class and discuss what changes need to be made. Until then, you are guaranteed these grades based on fulfilling these requirements:

You are Guaranteed an A in this course if you:

1. Complete at least eight(8) or more Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least eight(8) or more Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester
3. Complete at least twelve(12) How I Write Reflections
4. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft by the appointed due date
5. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft by the appointed due date
6. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

You are guaranteed a B in this course if you:

1. Complete at least seven(7) Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least seven(7) Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester
3. Complete at least eleven(11) How I Write Reflections
4. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft no more than one week late
5. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft no more than one week late
6. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

You are guaranteed a C in this course if you:

1. Complete at least six(6) Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least six(6) individual Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester

3. Complete at least ten(10) How I Write Reflections
4. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft by the end of the semester
5. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft by the end of the semester
6. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

As an instructor, I commit to:

1. providing formative feedback on all assignments where revision is expected and providing feedback upon request for assignments where revision is not expected
2. engaging with and responding thoughtfully to student work in a timely manner, especially when revision is required;
3. providing clear and reasonable criteria for major assignments;
4. providing oral or written feedback to explain judgments of quality as necessary;
5. seriously reconsidering judgements of quality if requested as part of a one-on-one meeting (i.e., office hours or arranged meeting [in-person or Zoom]);
6. creating availability for meetings with individual students who want to confer on drafts;
7. providing as much support in your journey with writing as I can.

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

Tentative Homework Schedule

In a perfect world with a perfect teacher, this is exactly how our week-to-week schedule would look. However, this is not a perfect world and I am not a perfect person, and so there may be changes that come to this schedule as the semester progresses. This is my *intended* schedule for our class with a brief “title” for each week to give you an idea of what we will be talking about. Things may need to change and move around as we get deeper into the semester, if this happens we will discuss the changes happening as a class. Until such a time, this is my Tentative Homework Schedule for our class:

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, August 19(No class)

Thursday, August 21 (First Day Of Class)

Sunday, August 24

I am not assigning any major reading or writing due to this being the first week, please fill out the Introduction survey by the beginning of next class(Aug. 26)

Week Two: Logical Fallacies

Tuesday, August 26

Reading Response 1 due at midnight

<https://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/c.php?g=849536&p=6077643>

Thursday August 28

Literacy Narrative 1 due at midnight

Sunday, August 31

Read the "Introduction," "About the Images," and "Who We Are" section in *How We Write*; How I Write Reflection 1 due at midnight.

Week Three: Developing An Argument

Tuesday, September 2

In lieu of class today, you will be expected to attend the "Jumpstarting Digital Literacy Showcase" in the Student Union Ballroom.

Reading Response 2 due at midnight

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/thesis>

Thursday, September 4

Literacy Narrative 2 due at midnight

Sunday, September 7

Read "Wilderness Group Tour" by Michael Collins; How I Write Reflection 2 due at midnight.

Week Four: Revising Your Writing

Tuesday, September 9

Reading Response 3 due at midnight

<https://jrstephens.medium.com/writing-is-not-writing-unless-its-revising-b65104539ce9>

Thursday, September 11

Literacy Narrative 3 due at midnight

Astrology Essay Rough Draft due Friday, September 12, By Midnight

Sunday, September 14

Read "How I Write (I)" by Suzanne Conklin Akbari; How I Write Reflection 3 due at midnight.

Week Five: Astrology Essay Peer Revisions

Tuesday, September 16

Thursday, September 18

Sunday, September 21

Read "How I Write (II)" by Alexandra Gillespie; How I Write Reflection 4 due at midnight.

Week Six: Astrology Essay Final Draft Workshops

Tuesday, September 23

Thursday, September 25

Astrology Essay Final Draft Due Friday, September 26, By Midnight

Sunday, September 28

Read "The Community You Have, The Community You Need: On Accountability

Groups" by Alice Hutton Sharp; How I Write Reflection 5 due at midnight.

Week Seven: Research And Writing

Tuesday, September 30

Reading Response 4 due at midnight

<https://www.cui.edu/studentlife/writing-studio/voice-paint-blog/blog/post/how-to-enjoy-writing-research-papers>

Thursday, October 2

Literacy Narrative 4 due at midnight

Sunday, October 5

Read "This Would Be Better If I Had A Co-Author" by Asa Simon Mittman; How I Write Reflection 6 due at midnight.

Week Eight: Audience Awareness

Tuesday, October 7

Reading Response 5 due at midnight

<https://wac.colostate.edu/repository/writing/guides/guide/index.cfm?guideid=19>

Thursday, October 9

Literacy Narrative 5 due at midnight

Sunday, October 12

Read "On the Necessity of Ignoring Those Who Offer Themselves as Examples" by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen; How I Write Reflection 7 due at midnight.

Week Nine: Revising For Your Peers

Tuesday, October 14

Reading Response 6 due at midnight

<https://wac.colostate.edu/repository/writing/guides/guide/index.cfm?guideid=43>

Thursday, October 16

Literacy Narrative 6 due at midnight

Person Of Interest Essay Rough Draft Due Friday, October 17, By Midnight

Sunday, October 19

Read "How I Write (III)" by Maura Nolan; How I Write Reflection 8 due at midnight.

Week Ten: Person of Interest Essay Peer Revisions

Tuesday, October 21

Thursday, October 23

Sunday, October 26

Read "Errant Practices" by Richard H. Godden; How I Write Reflection 9 due at midnight.

Week Eleven: Person Of Interest Essay Final Draft Workshops

Tuesday, October 28

Thursday, October 30

Person Of Interest Final Draft Due Friday, October 31, By Midnight

Sunday, November 2

Read "Cushion, Kernel, Craft" by Bruce Holsinger; How I Write Reflection 10 due at midnight.

Week Twelve: What Is Genre?

Tuesday, November 4

Reading Response 7 due at midnight

<https://writing.ecu.edu/uwc/writing-genres/>

<https://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio/resources-students/genres>

Thursday, November 6

Literacy Narrative 7 due at midnight

Sunday, November 9

Read "Writing By Accumulation" by Stuart Elden; How I Write Reflection 11 due at midnight.

Week Thirteen: A.I. Awareness

Tuesday, November 11

Reading Response 8 due at midnight

<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/education/it-and-tech/artificial-intelligence-in-school/>

Thursday, November 13

Literacy Narrative 8 due at midnight

Sunday, November 16

Read "Travelling Through Words" by Derek Gregory; How I Write Reflection 12 due at midnight.

Week Fourteen: The Self In Writing

Tuesday, November 18

Reading Response 9 due at midnight

"The Danger Of A Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>

Thursday, November 20

Literacy Narrative 9 due at midnight

How I Write Essay Rough Draft Due Friday, November 21, By Midnight

Sunday, November 23

Read "Wet Work: Writing as Encounter" by Steve Mentz; How I Write Reflection

13 due at midnight.

Week Fifteen: Final Project Peer Revisions

Tuesday, November 25

Thursday, November 27

Literacy Playlist Rough Draft Is Due Friday, November 28, By Midnight

Sunday, November 30

Read "Writing (Life): Ten Lessons" by Daniel T. Kline; How I Write Reflection

14 due at midnight.

Week Sixteen: Final Project Peer Revisions and Final Goodbyes

Tuesday, December 2

Thursday, December 4 (Last Day Of Class)

I am not assigning any homework for this last week because I want you to focus on your final projects.

How I Write Personal Essay Final Draft Is Due Thursday, December 11, By Midnight

Literacy Playlist Final Draft Is Due Friday, December 12, By Midnight