

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Fall 2025 Section 11 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/25/2025

"When you know how to think, it empowers you far beyond those who know only what to think." -- Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist

Welcome to English 1A!

Much has changed about writing and other forms of communication in our lifetimes. How have these technological changes affected our ideas about reading and writing? How can we continue to develop critical reading and thinking skills? Why is it useful to go through the process of writing? What do you specifically hope to gain during your college education? In this class, you will be encouraged to ask questions and follow your curiosity.

Toward that goal, you'll read extensively to connect your ideas with those of others, and you'll practice skills to engage your audience and incorporate quality sources. Strategies for creating and organizing your ideas will help you delve more deeply into what interests you and develop your authentic writer's voice.

Importantly, you will consider how writing helps with discovery and deeper thinking. By discussing and practicing together in collaboration, we'll use our collective and individual wisdom to spark new ideas and learn from each other.

Contact Information

Instructor: Carrie Hechtman

Email: carrie.hechtman@sjsu.edu

Office: CL 408G

Communication in This Course

How to Reach Me

Office Hours:

- Tuesdays 2:10-2:40 & 4:15-5:15 / Office: CL 408g
- Or by appointment on Zoom (using Zoom link in Canvas)
- Please email to set up a Zoom appointment

Email:

- I'm happy to answer questions! Email me through the Inbox in our Canvas page or at the email above.
- I will respond to emails within 24 hours and often sooner (except on Saturdays).

Other Ways We Will Communicate

Active Learning

In this course, we will incorporate strategies that allow all of us to learn from each other. Studies such as [this one in the Harvard Gazette](#) indicate that **active learning** is the most effective approach. Small group activities and partner work in class, as well as online interaction such as collaborative annotation, discussion posts, and peer feedback will form a central bond in our approach to learning in this class. Please work with me to make sure that each person's ideas and contributions will be valued and respected. Together we can build a supportive community of writers!

My Commitment to You

I'm here to support your learning! Outside of class meetings, I will communicate with you through announcements. You may also get a message from me if you start having late assignments. I'll provide feedback on your essay rough drafts and some of your other Canvas assignments. You will also get essay feedback from peers. You can reach out with questions after class, in office hours, or by email.

Your Communication Responsibilities

Peer Response & Peer Feedback

These play a key role in our class. As you practice annotating and giving helpful feedback to fellow writers, you'll see how your critiques will also help you grow as a writer.

Absences

If you need to miss class take the follow steps and I will excuse your absence:

1. Email me in advance about why you are missing class
2. Explain the work on Canvas that you will need make up
3. Set a deadline for when you will complete the work

Individual Office Hours Meeting

I invite you to come see me *at least once* to discuss your progress in the course and your writing topics or projects. Please email me to make an appointment or see me after class. I recommend meeting before or around mid-semester (week 9). Meeting with me can also earn you extra credit!

Meeting with a Tutor

Everyone can benefit from individual tutoring! Take advantage of this valuable resource at the [Writing Center](#) or through [Peer Connections](#). Plus, you can earn extra credit if you turn in a reflection on your tutoring visit.

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 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.

Our Classroom Values

Our best learning occurs when we are actively trying new things or solving problems. Experimenting and making mistakes are part of how we grow, and regular practice is more valuable than trying to turn in something perfect.

Our classroom culture will center on open-minded inquiry, in which we help and respect each other without judgment. Together, we can form our class of distinct individuals into a community of learners where each person feels supported as they push toward new achievements. Your skills and abilities will increase as you talk through your ideas, actively listen to others' thoughts, reflect on your progress, and enjoy the process of learning.

Each individual in this class matters, and I am committed to respecting and affirming your unique identities. If you would like to be addressed by a name or pronoun not apparent on the class roster, please advise me. It's important to me that you feel seen as a learner. Communication is a key factor that allows me to support you, so please let me know how I can help to make this quarter a valuable experience.

Course Materials

Class readings will be posted on Canvas or handed out. No textbooks will be required. **Bring a notebook** for freewriting and note-taking by hand.

Reliable computer – Please bring a laptop or tablet to every class to access course materials. Always use a computer when turning in assignments on Canvas. Some Canvas features are not available on the phone app. If needed, you can check out a free computer from the SJSU library to use for the semester here:

[Student Computing Services at the Library](#)

Required Free Resources:

- Please sign up for a free subscription to the *New York Times* through the library - <https://library.sjsu.edu/nyt-online>
 - Note: The only personal information you need to provide is your SJSU email address, and possibly your graduation year and alternate email address. You do not need to enter payment information, because your free pass is valid until you graduate or stop attending SJSU.
- You will need to sign up for a free **Perusall** account using the code below. Perusall is a platform that helps you annotate and collaborate on reading assignments.
 - [Link to Perusall to sign up for free access](#)
 - Code for our class in Perusall - HECHTMAN-MTR27
 - We'll go over this in class
- Please [request access to the Adobe Creative Cloud](#) which is free to students.

Campus Resources

[Peer Connections](#) - Tutoring and mentoring services for any subject, plus handy resources (like "How to Email your Professor" & "Time Management Tools on Canvas")

Student Services Center (SSC) 600, (408)924-2587

[Writing Center](#) - One-on-one tutoring sessions for writing support, and writing workshops in the Library

[Health and Wellness](#) - includes Wellness Center, Accessibility, Crisis Resources (SJSU Cares), Spartan Recreation

[Campus Belonging](#) - Resource Centers, Identity-Based Centers, Student Organizations

[UndocuSpartan](#) - Resources, Advocacy, Community

Course Requirements and Assignments

Major Projects

Unit 1: Your Narrative Voice Essay

Narrative stories are a powerful form of communication which has spanned the arc of human existence. In any field or situation, presenting an organized story with specific details can captivate and instruct an audience. In this unit, you'll create a personal essay narrating a significant literacy or language-related event from your life, following the lead of some model personal essays that we'll read.

Unit 2: Multimodal Project

In this unit, we'll join in a lively, ongoing conversation about how powerful new technologies such as social media and AI influence our views and impact the world. We'll explore articles, podcasts, and research about AI use, and you'll include your own experiences, supported by the ideas of other authors, to create an expository essay, video, narrated slide show, or podcast where you delve into a specific AI topic that interests you. Later, you will work with a group to present what you learned to your peers.

Unit 3: Persuasive Essay

Writing is not just a tool for communicating, but for thinking. The process of writing can help us figure out what and how we think. We'll learn about how to use reading and writing to develop your ideas, and how to show your thinking on the page as you endeavor to persuade readers to consider your opinion on a current topic related to education, technology, or another social issue.

Unit 4: Portfolio

Reflection is a key component of learning. In this final unit, you will take time to consider and discuss important growth areas in your writing as you create a final portfolio that gathers some of your work from the semester.

✓ Grading Information

Criteria

Contract Grading - Concept

I believe if students aren't focused on getting a higher grade but are earnestly doing their best, sharing their perspectives, and responding to the feedback they get, they will become more confident writers and happier learners. Therefore, instead of grading on the quality of your work, I will be grading on your effort and labor in the form of completion points.

The basic idea of the contract is that you will earn an A or B in this class if you do the assignments on time and show that you are consistently engaged in the class by participating and providing peer response and feedback.

You also need to complete each assignment in the "spirit and manner" intended (Inoue 130) by meeting the requirements and putting in your best thought and effort. This type of grading is often called **Contract Grading**, an agreement or contract about how much effort you will put into your learning during the course.

However, you could also think of it as an **Ungrading Contract** since you will not get any grades on individual assignments, but rather completion points, ongoing feedback, and support toward your learning. You will also be asked to do a self-assessment of the grade you believe you earned at the end of the semester.

Contract Grading - Terms

Complete Assignments 10 pts	For each assignment you turn in on time and with thoughtful effort , you will receive 10 completion points (some essay assignments will earn 20 points).
Late Assignments (48 hours or less) 8 pts	Late assignments turned in within 2 days of the due date will receive 8 completion points. Note: In some cases like peer reviews, late work may not be accepted, so these will be marked as ignored.
Later Assignments (more than 48 hours) 7 pts	Late assignments turned in more than 2 days after the due date will receive 7 completion points.
Partially Complete Assignments 5 pts	Assignments not completed “in the manner and spirit intended,” such as not meeting minimum guidelines put forth by me or negotiated by our class, will be partially complete. In most cases, you are expected to revise a partially complete assignment within 3 days of receiving notification for full credit or after 3 days for late credit.
Ignored Assignments 0 pts	Anything that is not completed and turned in is considered ignored. If completed later, it becomes a late assignment. You are encouraged to make up ignored assignments before the end of each unit to improve your grade and support your learning. Note: Major essay projects contain multiple parts, and all must be completed to pass the course.

A Note On Participation

Our learning as a class is built on you being present and prepared for class. Not only will this be good for you, since you will be able to do the work of the class better, but — and this is the important part — you are an essential part of our classroom community. We need your ideas, enthusiasm, insights, and curiosity. Attendance and real engagement in our work is a major part of how you will make our class more meaningful and grow personally as a student.

I encourage you to find an authentic path for your participation — whether it's sharing ideas in big class discussions, in our smaller group work, or in our much-valued peer reviews. Any of these will earn you weekly participation points. You can earn up to **5 participation points per week** for taking part in

classroom activities.

Absences: Students who attend class regularly learn more and do better work. We will work on many assignments together during class. I will keep track of your absences although attendance is not calculated into your grade. See the Communications section above regarding your responsibility in case of absence.

Tardiness: Being prompt is professional and courteous to others and helps you practice beneficial habits for success. Please arrive on time to class.

Breakdown

Letter Grade Ranges

A 94+%	C 76-74%
A- 93-90%	C- 73-70%
B+ 89-87%	D+ 69-67%
B 86-84%	D 66-64%
B- 83-80%	D- 63-61%
C+ 79-77%	F 60-0%

Grade Breakdown by Category

Category	Weight	Description
Major Projects	45%	Each of our 4 units will culminate in an essay, multimodal project or portfolio. We will practice the writing process by completing these projects in parts - rough draft, peer feedback, revision plan, revised draft, reflection. All parts of the major projects must be completed to fulfill the requirements of the class.
Practice & Pre-writing	45%	Assignments include reading annotations, writing and responding to discussion posts, brainstorming exercises, and practicing writing strategies. In addition to building confidence and skills, these assignments allow you to start creating material you will use in your major projects.
Participation	10%	You can earn up to 5 participation points per week for taking part in daily classroom activities.

How To Check Your Grade: You can get a good sense of where you stand by checking Canvas to see if you have any missing/late/partial assignments. In case some assignments are not yet scored in Canvas, it's always best to check with the instructor to get the most up-to-date grade information.

Important Note about Plagiarism and AI Tools:

As we learn about and engage with AI technologies, please keep in mind the importance of presenting your own unique thoughts, experiences, and voice in your writing.

One of the course goals is to help you learn to write and communicate effectively, which requires practice. Therefore, you must learn how to create, edit, and recognize high-quality writing yourself. If AI can do these tasks without you, you won't have employable skills.

You are responsible for the words, ideas, and knowledge under your name or byline, including content created by AI. Although AI tools can aid in research and writing, they can contain misinformation, problematic simplifications, bias, and discriminatory language. Those problems become your problem when using AI in your writing.

We will discuss AI tools as a class to distinguish between how they can serve our writing and how they can get us into trouble as writers.

- Currently, some acceptable ways to use the technology might be creating an outline for a research essay or using it to check grammar errors after composing your own work.
- Unacceptable: using ChatGPT or any AI platform to partially or fully produce written paragraphs, drafts, responses, or essays and turning in the work as if it were your own words without citing the words that were generated by AI and properly explaining your process. (See SAID below).

Being accountable for what comes after your byline means doing your best to make sure that your writing conforms to your own ethical standards and [SJSU's Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Policies](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>). Citing AI and being transparent about your use of it in your process notes is a way of taking responsibility.

How To Cite Your AI Use

SJSU has developed a document for citing and describing your AI use called the [SAID \(Student AI Disclosure\)](#). Please fill out this form with specific details for rough drafts or any assignment where you use AI, and turn the form into Canvas with your assignment.

Note: These sections are **required** (not optional) for our class:

1. **Fill out the "Custom Settings/Chat history Links" section** to explain the exact prompts you used, the resulting text you are turning in, and the revisions you made in this process. Include specific quotes and details. (150+ words)
2. **You must also use the "Context or Explanations" section to reflect** on how using this AI tool for this assignment was helpful and/or challenging, and what you learned about writing, AI, your topic, yourself as a student, etc. from the process. (150+ words)

Misusing AI 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.

On the other hand, honestly reflecting on your AI use, will teach you about your process and help me understand issues students are wrestling with, so we can further support positive learning and develop our class policies. If you are unsure, please ask!

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	Assigned Readings & Annotations (due Thurs)	Writing Assignments (due the following Tues)
Week 1 Aug 21	Getting Acquainted Our Syllabus and Intro to Perusall "Want to Be Happy Today? Try Talking to a Stranger" (in class)	Writer's Questionnaire Who We Are - Slide Deck Syllabus annotations & questions
Week 2 Aug 25-29	"The Key to Success in College is So Simple, It's Hardly Ever Mentioned" "Confronting the Unknown" Active Reading Strategies	Discussion Post 1 - What is school for? What do you hope to gain from your college education and why? Your top habits for success (from readings)
Week 3 Sept 1-5 No classes Labor Day, Mon 9/1	Begin Unit 1- Narrative Writing "Learning to Read" by Malcolm X Digital Literacy Workshop 9/2 Rhetorical Strategies	Mini-DP 2 - Reflection on Digital Literacy Workshop Discussion Post 3 - A Literacy Experience

<p>Week 4</p> <p>Sept 8-12</p>	<p>"Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan</p> <p>"How to Tame a Wild Tongue" or "Chameleon"</p> <p>3 Ways to Speak English - TED talk</p> <p>Scene vs Summary / Narrative Structure</p>	<p>Discussion Post 4 - An Experience with Language</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>Sept 15-19</p> <p>9/16 - Drop add deadline</p>	<p>"Shitty First Drafts," Anne Lamott</p> <p>Sample Narrative Essays</p> <p>The Writing Process / Peer Feedback</p>	<p>Rough Draft - Your Narrative Essay due for Peer Feedback</p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>Sept 22-26</p>	<p>Begin Unit 2 -Multimodal Project</p> <p>SJSU AI Toolbox - "The Technology"</p> <p>Articles/Info about AI and education</p> <p>Revision / Academic Inquiry</p>	<p>Discussion Post 5 - Reading Response</p> <p>Conferences (extra credit)</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>Sept 29-Oct 3</p>	<p>Articles/Info about AI and education</p> <p>"The Art of Quoting"</p> <p>Research Techniques / Following Your Curiosity</p>	<p>Your Narrative Essay - Revised Draft and Reflection due</p> <p>Discussion Post 6 - Topic Proposal</p> <p>Conferences (extra credit)</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct 6-10</p>	<p>"Saying Why It Matters"</p> <p>Reading & Annotating Sources</p> <p>Quoting / Interviewing</p>	<p>Discussion Post 7 - Quote Journals</p> <p>Conferences (extra credit)</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Oct 13-17</p>	<p>Effective Paragraphs, Introductions</p> <p>Outlining & Scripting / Revision Plan</p>	<p>Multimodal Project - Rough draft due for peer feedback</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Oct 20-24</p>	<p>Begin Unit 3 - Persuasive Writing</p> <p>"What You Missed That Day ..." (poem)</p> <p>"The Case Against Grades"</p> <p>"Are Schools Killing Creativity?" TED Talk</p>	<p>Discussion Post 8 - Should Schools Have Grades?</p>

Week 11 Oct 27-31	Op-Ed Scavenger Hunt Topic Proposals Revision Plan	Multimodal Project – Revised Draft/Final Version due with Reflection
Week 12 Nov 3-7	Reading & Annotating Sources Refining Your Argument	Discussion Post 9 - First paragraphs of rough draft, quote journals
Week 13 Nov 10-14 No classes Veteran's Day, Tues 11/10	Work on presentations Review Paragraphs, Introductions	Persuasive Essay – Rough Draft due for peer feedback
Week 14 Nov 17-21	Begin Unit 4 - Portfolio & Reflection Peer Feedback	Revision Plan
Week 15 Nov 24-25	Work on presentations Fall Break – No Classes 11/26-28	Persuasive Essay – Revised Draft & Reflection due
Week 16 Dec 1-5	Last week of regular classes Reflecting & Sharing Group presentations	Discussion Post 10 - Reflection on Group collaboration
Week 17 Dec 8-12 Finals begin	No Engl 1A class -Study Day & Finals begin	
Wk 18 Dec 15-17 Finals	Finals day for Engl 1A - Thurs, Dec 11, 1:00-3:00 pm Reflecting, Sharing & Celebrating	Final Reflection & Portfolio due on Dec 14

Note: This schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be immediately updated in Canvas and discussed during class.