

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Fall 2025 Section 86 Fully Online 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/17/2025

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Mondays (online) 4:30-5:30 or by Zoom appointment

Course Information

What *is* writing? What does it mean to be a writer? Who are you as a reader and writer? How do you develop an academic voice that is real to you? How do you engage with others' views, through reading, speaking, and writing, in a larger dialogue or conversation about topics in the university setting? What conversations do you want to enter? What do you wish to contribute?

We will explore these and other questions through a focus on topics relevant to student experiences, ranging from the emergence of AI technology to our language stories to our connections to family and community. My hope is to push you to think deeply about what it means to develop an authentic sense of identity in an academic space. We will also explore what it means to develop this identity through *writing*. My goal is create a writing environment where you are encouraged to try on ideas that you explore through different genres of writing, and push yourself beyond your current comfort level with language with support from our class community and me.

Online Asynchronous

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

Course Expectations

Participation & Engagement. Since this is an asynchronous class, your participation and engagement are encouraged in multiple and various ways. I ask that you please watch the weekly videos I will post and respond with any thoughts, comments, or questions that you may have. I ask that you please read my weekly emails for any information or updates or encouragement to you. I look forward to reading your writing and will respond to each submission with detailed thoughts and comments; you are always welcome to respond in kind. Sharing is valuable and I hope that we will have the chance to communicate and connect in a real way, despite the online asynchronous format. Please just know that your participation and voice are valued.

Weekly Videos, Announcements, & Keeping Up. Each Monday, I will post a video message to all of you on Canvas to introduce our focus and work for the coming week. Any work for the week – smaller assignments, responses, or reflections – will be due by the following Monday. I will respond to your submitted work within a week of its submission.

Given the online and asynchronous nature of the course, and the fact that we do not meet weekly in person, it is very important that you check Canvas regularly for announcements, emails, and updates. I welcome your questions! Please reach out to me whenever something is not clear to you or you are unsure about expectations.

Office Hours & “Coffee Time.” I’d like to establish weekly drop-in office hours on zoom as an informal time and space where we can connect and talk about anything that feels relevant or useful to you with regard to the class. Currently, I’ve scheduled these for Mondays from 4:30-5:30. This is flexible and I can offer another time if many of you are busy. You can always request a meeting time with me outside of our weekly “coffee time” by zoom appointment as well.

Meetings with Me. I will ask you to meet with me twice during the semester. We can set up a time during Monday office hours or “coffee time,” or we can set an appointment for another time that works for you during the week. See above (#2) for a description of the goals for our meeting times!

Communication. My hope is to give you a sense of my personality, tone, and teaching style as much as possible, and I encourage you to reach out as often as you would like to do the same.

I invite your email communication and will do my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours. Since we won’t have weekly synchronous classes for in-person communication, it’s important to build channels of communication through various modalities. In this spirit, plan to post weekly videos, firstly just to say hello, and also to convey the plan, readings, and expectations for the week, along with any relevant information or updates.

On ChatGPT & Generative AI. To be clear: use of ChatGPT or other generative AI for work submitted in this class will be considered a violation of SJSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Academic Integrity. [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 \[pdf\]](#) asks that you are honest in all of your academic coursework. This value is at the heart of all academic endeavors. While there are many ways to argue a position or ask others to engage with your views, the non-negotiable here is that your work is uniquely *yours*.

Course Evaluation. You will be asked to submit a formal evaluation of this course during the last class. However, please do not save feedback for the final evaluation form. You are welcome to share your comments as the course unfolds.

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

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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.

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

Canvas. The majority of the materials for this class will be uploaded onto Canvas. There are readings assigned for almost every class. Many readings are also linked in the syllabus.

For help using Canvas, please see the [Canvas Student Resources Page](https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/software-tools/teaching-tools/canvas/student-resources/index.php), at <https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/software-tools/teaching-tools/canvas/student-resources/index.php>. Canvas will send notifications directly to your SJSU account, so please check your SJSU account regularly to stay on top of course updates.

Additional Resources

Free Online Writing Lab Resources:

- Purdue University's [Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/) - <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- Excelsior [Online Writing Lab](https://owl.excelsior.edu/) - <https://owl.excelsior.edu/>

SJSU Writing Center. This is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. It offers one-on-one support, as well as workshops each semester on different writing topics. You can make an appointment by visiting the Writing Center website, or you can find many online resources to help you at www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course Writing & Assignments

1. Smaller Assignments, Reflections, and Written Responses (20% of your grade)

Each week, I will post a video with an explanation of the week's content and an invitation to engage with it through writing or video. I will also post weekly readings on Canvas and analysis or reflection questions that will seek to elicit your genuine thoughts and understandings. These shorter tasks are intended to offer you the chance to communicate your ideas and for us to engage in dialogue together, since I will always write you back. My responses to your ideas will not always be evaluative; in fact, they will be collaborative much of the time. This back-and-forth is especially important, given that we don't have an actual in-person class to engage together.

2. Zoom Meetings (10% of your grade)

Twice during the semester, I will ask you to meet with me on Zoom, either during our official office hours or "coffee time," or by appointment. The purpose of these meetings are for us to check in and talk about the class, your needs, your ideas, and your hopes and goals as a student. We can also talk about your work on specific writing pieces or any of the work of the class. And we can meet as many times as you'd like. I'm setting two as a goal so we have at least a little chance to know each other beyond online communication.

3. Self-Reflection as a Writer (15% of your grade)

This paper will ask you to write and reflect on your experiences and associations with writing (both in and out of school), and how these have shaped your views of yourself as a writer, and what it means to *be* a writer. What, to you, counts as writing? What is your relationship with writing and how has it evolved over time? How has school influenced – for better or worse – your sense of yourself as a writer? What is your current relationship with AI, and what does it mean to write in the era of AI?

What larger conversations do you want to enter through your writing, and where do you see writing as a future tool for you in your academic and career endeavors?

4. Language Stories: A Genre-Blend (15% of your grade)

What is the significance of linguistic identity, and why does it matter? How does the connection between language and identity take shape for you? In other words, what is your *language story*? Using the language stories of authors like Amy Tan, Julia Alvarez, and Trevor Noah as a guide, we will explore our own relationships with language as we consider the following issues:

how linguistic racism, bias, and privilege play out in our society; why language is a core part of our culture and identity; how losing a native language affects us; why language can be exclusive or inclusive; how Standard English can silence other tongues; why the lingo of a place – including the Bay area – is a legitimate form of linguistic identity.

*Note: I realize that not all students feel that they have a “language story,” even after we spend some time looking at the language stories of the authors we will read. In this case, an alternative writing piece on the concept of “single stories” in our lives and our world will be an option.

5. Argument Writing and “Voice” through Empathy Letters (15% of your grade)

My mentor, Andrea Lunsford, wrote a book several years ago to argue that [*Everything's an Argument*](#). We will play with this idea as we consider the power of argument in the second-person voice – from a real “I” to a real “you” – through the form of a letter. We are often taught that “I” is not allowed in academic writing, but why not? Where does this rule come from? Why do so many beautiful pieces of scholarship include the author’s subjectivity? We are sometimes taught that analytical writing requires us to communicate in an abstract, third-person voice, yet we can easily lose the ability to hear ourselves. Through a genre called “empathy letters,” we will define “voice” as it ties to our genuine position on an issue that affects us, and the sense that we belong in the conversation and have something to say.

6. Multimodal Piece & Reflection (15% of your grade)

This piece will ask you to choose any piece you’ve written so far and transfer your message and ideas into one or more modes of communication and expression other than written text: visual, auditory, digital, kinesthetic, photo essay, podcast, video, blog, you name it. Your goal is to, literally, re-medium ideas. You should consider your rhetorical purpose and audience through your choice of mode and its connection to your message. I’ll offer examples, and I’ll ask you to submit a brief reflection at the end to share how this “re-mediuming” experience felt for you.

7. Final English 1A Portfolio (10% of your grade)

Each semester, the English department asks all students in first-year writing classes to submit a portfolio with selections from your work across the semester. You will choose which pieces you wish to submit, and you will include a reflection on your identity and growth as a writer. These are not graded, but are instead considered as “evidence” of the argument you will make for your work in English 1A and its impact (positive or negative) on your development as a writer.

✓ Grading Information

Calculating Your Grades. You will be graded according to the following breakdown.

Assignment	Points Possible	Percentage of Course Grade
Weekly Assignments, Reflections, & Written Responses	200	20%
Piece #1: Self-Reflection as a Writer	150	15%
Piece #2: Language Stories / Single Stories – A Genre-Blend	150	15%
Piece #3: Argument Writing & “Voice” through Empathy Letters	150	15%
Zoom Meetings with Bronwyn	100	10%
Piece #4: Multimodal Piece & Reflection	150	15%
Final English 1A Portfolio	100	10%

Criteria

- “A” work is thoughtful, organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the writing’s purpose, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar and mechanics.
- “B” work demonstrates competence in the same categories as an “A” essay, but it may not be as thoughtfully developed in one of these areas. It will respond to the purpose suitably and may contain some grammatical or mechanical errors.
- “C” work will complete the requirements, but it will be minimally developed. It may also miss opportunities for thoughtful development in grammar, mechanics, usage, or voice.
- “D” work will not meet all the requirements or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic and purpose. It will not show thoughtful development. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.

- An "F" does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

Breakdown

You will receive a **letter grade** at the end of the semester, based on the following calculations:

93-100% A	83-86% B	73-76% C	63-66% D
90-92% A-	80-82% B-	70-72% C-	60-62% D-
87-89% B+	77-79% C+	67-69% D+	0-59% F

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

Class Calendar

*Note: Assignments and due dates may change, depending on the shape things take once we get started. Any adjustments to the schedule or assignments will be communicated to you at least one class in advance.

Week 1

August 25-29	<p>Module 1: What is writing? Who is a writer, and do you consider yourself one (or did you ever)? What does it mean to write in the age of AI?</p> <p>Reading for the Week: Two student papers, examples from both high school and college; one from a local high school, one from SJSU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your associations with writing, both in and out of school? What has influenced them? • What is the difference between writing for communicative versus evaluative purposes? Which do schools emphasize? Which do writers do? <p>Written response due for 9-2 (Monday 9-1 is Labor Day)</p>
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Week 2

September 2-5	<p>Reading for the Week: Excerpts from John Warner's <i>More Than Words</i> – Introduction, Chapters 1 & 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to write in the age of AI? AI can “generate.” AI can “process.” Humans can “think” and “feel.” What’s the difference? • Why does John Warner argue that only humans write? <p>Written response due for 9-8</p>
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Week 3

September 8-12	<p>Reading for the Week: Comparing AI and Human Writing - What's the Difference, and Can you Tell?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is voice? To what extent can AI take on a uniquely human voice? Can it sound like you? Or can't it? • What are your thoughts and feelings on AI overall? In what ways do you see it as a tool? What lines do you not want to cross? <p>Comparison questions due for 9-15</p>
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Week 4

September 15-19	<p>Instead of a reading, please view this TED Talk: Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's "The Danger of a Single Story"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a single story? Why is it "dangerous?" • What single stories have you encountered, both personally and in the world? • When have you held a single story about someone or something? <p>No response this week - just work on your Self-Reflection as a Writer piece.</p>
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Week 5

September 22-26	<p>Module 2: What is a "language story," and what is yours? How does the connection between language and identity take shape for you, and what is the significance?</p> <p>Reading for the Week: Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" paired with a language story example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does Amy Tan mean by different "Englishes?" • How do linguistic bias and privilege shape how we use language? <p>Please submit your "Self-Reflection as a Writer" piece by Monday, 9-22</p>
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Week 6

Sept 29 - October 3	<p>Reading for the Week: Julia Alvarez's "La Gringuita – On Losing a Native Language" paired with a language story example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the experience of losing a native language? Why does this happen? • How do we navigate language when we straddle different cultural spaces? • In what language do you <i>love</i>? Why does this matter? <p>Written or video response due for 10-6</p>
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Week 7

October 6-10	<p>Reading for the Week: Trevor Noah's "Chameleon" paired with a language story example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with Trevor Noah that "language, more than color, defines us to people?" Why or why not? <p>Written or video response due for 10-13</p>
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Week 8

October 13-17	<p>Reading for the Week: bell hooks, "Language"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does bell hooks mean by the idea that "language disrupts?" How is language interconnected with power?• What is Standard English? Who sets the "standard?" What is problematic about privileging it in a way that messages its superiority over other ways of speaking?• What is vernacular, and what about it is often misunderstood? <p>Written or video response due for 10-20</p>
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Week 9

October 20-24	<p>Reading for the Week: None</p> <p>Please submit your "Language Story" piece by Monday, 10-27</p> <p>*Note: You are also welcome to submit a piece on a "single story" that you have wrestled with or internalized, or that you have held.</p>
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Week 10

October 27-31	<p>Module 3: Argument Writing & "Voice" through Empathy Letters</p> <p>Reading for the Week: John Warner, "The Five Paragraph Essay" from <i>Why They Can't Write</i> & "Kill the Five Paragraph Essay" from <i>Inside Higher Ed</i>; Excerpts from Graff & Birkenstein's <i>They Say, I Say</i></p> <p>Why is the five-paragraph essay an imitation of real writing? Why does John Warner argue that "we rarely ever see one in the wild?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a real rule about using "I" in academic writing?• What is the difference between "proof of performance" writing and that which enters a real conversation? <p>Written or video response due for 11-3</p>
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Week 11

November 3-7	<p>Readings for the Week: Kevin Love's "Everyone is Going Through Something," from The Players' Tribune, & Naomi Osaka, "It's O.K. Not to Be O.K."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does our passion about an issue lead to our position on it? • How does our position on an issue translate to our writing voice, and our sense that we belong in the conversation? <p>Written or video response due for 11-10</p>
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Week 12

November 10-14	<p>Reading for the Week: Excerpts from <i>Reclaiming Our Stories – Narratives of Identity, Resilience, and Empowerment</i>; Examples of Empathy Letters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is empathy? For others? For ourselves? • What does it mean for our own growth to shift our perspective and understanding towards empathy? How might this be a way to reclaim a story that had power over us or felt unresolved? <p>Brainstorm due for 11-17</p>
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Week 13

November 17-21	<p>Reading for the Week: None.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an empathy letter? What's the point of writing one? • What do you notice about your voice as you write an argument in a letter like this?
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Week 14 - No Classes on November 26-28 due to Thanksgiving Holiday

November 24-25	<p>"Writings" for the Week: Examples of Multimodal Expression & Project Ideas</p> <p>Please submit your Empathy Letter by Monday, 11-24</p>
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Week 15

December 1-5	<p>Module 4: Multimodal Reflection</p> <p>“Writings” for the Week: Examples of Multimodal Expression & Project Ideas</p> <p>Please focus on your final pieces for the class and set a time for office hours with me if you need to!</p>
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Week 16 - Finals Week

December 8-12	<p>We will not have a formal final exam. You can think of your English 1A Portfolio as the final. I will be available for office hours at multiple times this week if you need help.</p> <p>Please submit your Multimodal Piece & Reflection by Friday, 12-12</p> <p>Please submit your Final English 1A Portfolio piece by Friday, 12-12</p>
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