

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 35 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/27/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Mark Dowdy

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Meeting days/times: Tu/Th 1:30-2:45 pm PST

Classroom: Dudley Moorhead Hall 354

Office Hours:

In-person: Tuesdays, 12 -1 p.m. in Faculty Offices 215

Online: Wednesdays, 12-1 p.m. on Zoom (<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/83868174937?pwd=3TJGKdFtE9UrISFb0RWB4StMb2vxW3.1> (<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/83868174937?pwd=3TJGKdFtE9UrISFb0RWB4StMb2vxW3.1>))

In the event that my office hours conflict with your schedule, I am also available for **both in-person and online appointments**.

Course Information

Course Theme: A Place to Belong

All the work you complete in this section of English 1A this semester will be focused on a central theme: *A Place to Belong*. Studies indicate that themes offer substance, context, and a sense of direction for writing classes. What this means for you is that all of the readings, essays, and other activities assigned to you in this course will focus on the theme of belonging. You will be asked to write and reflect on what it means to feel a sense of belonging, how it feels to be connected to a place and/or community.

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: 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>)

Course Policies

Instruction Mode: In-Person

Please note that the instruction mode for this course is listed as "In-Person" in the university catalog. In order to participate fully in this course, you will need to attend in person. Please contact me as soon as possible if there are any circumstances that prevent you from attending class on a regular basis.

Extra Credit

This course does not offer extra credit opportunities. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, your final grade will be based solely on the essays, assignments, and participation outlined in this syllabus.

"Ghosting" the Class

As stated above, the instruction mode for this class is designated as "in person." This means that, despite our use of Canvas, Google, and other online platforms, this is not an "online" or a "hybrid" course. Consequently, classroom activities cannot be made up online at a later time and date.

If you are unable to attend class due to illness, injury, or other circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy

"Using ChatGPT to complete assignments is like bringing a forklift into the weight room; you will never improve your cognitive fitness that way." — Ted Chiang

While the class will use AI applications for discussion and presentation purposes, the ***use of AI to generate text for writing assignments is expressly forbidden.***

It is acceptable to use the AI features embedded in presentation tools such as Gamma, Canva, Prezi, and Adobe Express. In addition, the class will discuss and debate the use of chatbots such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Claude for study purposes. Are such uses ethical? Do they have educational value? Students will be encouraged to reflect on these questions and share their perspectives.

All violations will be addressed in accordance with SJSU's academic integrity guidelines. Depending on the severity, this may involve a formal review, disciplinary action, or other institutional processes.

If you feel overwhelmed or stressed in this course or balancing other responsibilities, you're not alone. Many English 1A students experience similar challenges, and there are plenty of resources and support systems to help you succeed. Please reach out to me via email, during office hours, or after class, to discuss your situation. I'm happy to work with you on solutions, such as extending deadlines, adjusting assignments, or finding alternative approaches. Together, we can find a way forward that works for you.

Academic Integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [Academic Integrity Policy F15-7](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-7.pdf) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-7.pdf>) [pdf] requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>) website for more information.

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

With the exception of *There There*, which is free to all incoming SJSU students, the course materials below can be accessed online or purchased/rented at the Spartan Bookstore.

Book Purchasing Program: First Day™

To enhance your learning experience and provide affordable access to the right course materials, this course is part of an inclusive access model called First Day™. You may easily access the materials at a discounted price and benefit from single sign-on access with no codes required in Canvas. Please note, You should not be prompted to purchase the materials via canvas or the publisher. This will result in double billing (and at a higher cost)

You will see the first day billing on your student account via the Bursar's Office shortly after 2/17/26. However any questions regarding the materials should be directed to your professor or Spartan Bookstore 408-924-1820 or 408-924-1831.

It is not recommended that you Opt-Out, as these materials are required to complete the course. However, you may choose to Opt-Out on the first day of class and no later than 2/17/26. You will see the course materials charge on your Bursar's student account unless you have opted out prior to the deadline.

For more information and FAQs go to customer care.bncollege.com.

Student Tutorial Videos

Accessing Your eTextbook: <https://vimeo.com/304674236>

Opting Out of First Day for your eTextbook: <https://vimeo.com/304674616>

Opting Out of First Day for your courseware: <https://vimeo.com/304674959>

Other Features on the Course Materials page: <https://vimeo.com/304675344>

Customer Care Contact Information

Customer Care is available 24/7 to help students with questions about accessing their course material, using their eTextbook, or opting-out or in to the First Day program. Be sure to share the below information with your students

- Link to Customer Care website: customer care.bncollege.com
- FAQs and Tutorial Videos for the First Day

Program: <https://tinyurl.com/firstdayfaq>

- Open a ticket Online for the Customer Care

team: <https://tinyurl.com/customer carerequest>

- Email the Customer Care team: bookstorecustomer care@bncollege.com
- Call the Customer Care team: 1-844-9-EBOOKS

There There: a Novel

Author: Tommy Orange

Publisher: Knopf

Edition: First Edition

Year: 2018

ISBN: 978-0525520375

Price: Ebook available for free from SJSU's MLK Library

Let's Talk...: A Pocket Rhetoric

Author: Andrea Lunsford

Publisher: Norton

Edition: 2nd Edition

Year: 2025

ISBN: 978-1324101345

Available in ebook (recommended) and print formats.

Required Open Education Resources

For readings about rhetoric, composition, and argumentation, we will be using open educational resources (OER). These are available online for free. While I may introduce other texts (and will provide you with the necessary access whenever I do), we will primarily use selections from the following:

- [Excelsior Online Writing Lab: Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: \(https://owl.excelsior.edu/\)](https://owl.excelsior.edu/) <https://owl.excelsior.edu/>
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab: Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: \(https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html\)](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

Other required materials

In addition to the above texts, I will sometimes assign additional readings from online sources such as news sites or academic journals. When I do so, I will make them available on Canvas.

Required: Notebook and Pen

Please bring a notebook and pen to class. During most class sessions, you will need them to complete the in-class activities.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Below are the major writing assignments for this course. With the exception of Packback questions, which are posted online every week, each major essay requires a first and final draft.

- Multimodal Personal Essay (2,000 drafted words; 1,000 words revised and edited; GELOs 1-5).
- Letter to the Editor (1,500 drafted words; 750 words revised and edited; GELOs 1-5).
- Rhetorical Analysis of Visual Text (2,500 drafted words; 1,250 words revised and edited; GELOs 1-5).
- Study Guide: *There There* (1,000 drafted words; 500 words revised and edited)
- Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection Essay: (1,500 drafted words: 500-750 words revised and edited; GELOs 1-5).

In addition to the above essays, other assignments and activities in this course include class discussions, Peer Review, group projects, quizzes, and online homework.

Grading Information

This course uses a labor-based grading contract, adapted from Asao B. Inoue's *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*. Under this system, grades are based on the completion of course labor rather than subjective evaluations of writing quality.

Students enter ENGL 1A with different educational, linguistic, and rhetorical backgrounds. Grading writing solely on quality often reflects prior access to academic discourse rather than learning achieved in the course. A labor-based grading contract emphasizes what all students can control: preparation, drafting,

revision, feedback, reflection, and participation.

You will receive regular feedback on your writing to support learning and revision. This feedback does not determine your grade. Final grades are determined by whether you meet the terms of the contract.

***Note:** This contract is provisional. During the first weeks of the semester, we will discuss it as a class and may revise or clarify its terms. The final version will be posted on Canvas.*

Contract Grades & Required Labor

Your final grade depends on which contract level you meet by the end of the term.

B Contract (Default Grade)

You will earn a B if you complete all required course labor and meet the participation expectations listed below.

Required Course Labor

- Submission of all major writing assignments:
 - Multimodal Personal Essay
 - Letter to the Editor
 - Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text
 - Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection Essay
- Completion of all required drafts and revisions
- Submission of the final Writing Portfolio
- Completion of required informal writing, homework, and in-class activities

Participation & Engagement

- Participation in at least 2 of 3 peer review workshops
- Meaningful participation in peer review and group activities
- Regular engagement in class discussions and in-class writing
- Completion of approximately 75% of assigned homework

Attendance & Conduct

- No more than 2 late submissions (within 72 hours of the deadline)
- No more than 1 instance of inappropriate technology use

Meeting these expectations earns a B for the course.

A Contract

To earn an A, you must meet all B-level requirements *and* complete additional labor that demonstrates sustained engagement and growth as a first-year academic writer.

Additional A-Level Labor

Complete at least one of the following:

- Submit a serious, complete application to the SJSU First-Year Writing Digital Literacy Symposium (acceptance is not required)
- Attend a pre-approved campus, literary, or public event and submit a reflective response (300–500 words) connecting the experience to course themes or writing practices
- Complete a substantial additional revision of one major essay beyond the required revision, demonstrating sustained engagement with feedback and reflection

Additional Expectations

- Consistent, reliable participation throughout the semester
- No inappropriate technology use

An A represents sustained engagement, responsibility, and commitment beyond minimum course requirements.

C, D, and F Contracts

- C: Most required labor completed, but participation is inconsistent
- D: Significant required labor missing
- F: Most course labor not completed

Detailed criteria for these grades will be included in the final contract posted on Canvas.

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

Below is the schedule for this semester. While it includes many of the assigned readings, you will be notified ahead of time via the Canvas LMS when other readings are due by class time. In addition, it does not include homework due on Canvas, for which you will also be notified through the Canvas LMS. This schedule is subject to change with fair notice via Canvas.

| When | Topic | Notes |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Week 1: Thursday, 1/22 | Building classroom community | Introductions + overview of course syllabus. |

| When | Topic | Notes |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Week 2: Tuesday, 1/27 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <p>Building a classroom community. During this activity the class will deliberate over the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about each other's expectations for, and concerns about, the course • Take the necessary steps to foster a productive classroom community |
| Week 2: Thursday, 1/29 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: "The Subtle Ways Colleges Discriminate Against Poor Students, Explained with Cartoons," (https://www.vox.com/2017/9/11/16270316/college-mobility-culture), by Alvin Chang. (https://www.vox.com/2017/9/11/16270316/college-mobility-culture) • Free student access to Adobe Creative Cloud. Sign up here. (https://www.sjsu.edu/adobe/creative-cloud/access/adobe-students.php) • Multimodal Personal Essay assigned • In-class activity: What reading strategies do you use? |
| Week 3: Tuesday, 2/3 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," by Gloria Anzaldúa (digital copy available on Canvas) • Working in groups, the class will pre-read <i>There There</i> by Tommy Orange |
| Week 3: Thursday, 2/5 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <p>Readings/Viewings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There There</i> • <i>Let's Talk</i>, chapter 1: Listening |
| Week 4: Tuesday, 2/10 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <p>Readings/Viewings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>There There</i> ◦ <i>Let's Talk</i>, chapter 2: Thinking Rhetorically ◦ <i>Let's Talk</i>, chapter 13: Narrating |
| Week 4: Thursday, 2/12 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline to upload first draft of Multimodal Personal Essay to Canvas by class time on Thursday, • Peer Review of Multimodal Personal Essay during class |
| Week 5: Tuesday, 2/17 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings/Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>There There</i> ◦ <i>Let's Talk</i>, chapter 3: Engaging Respectfully with Others |
| Week 5: Thursday, 2/19 | Multimodal Personal Essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft of Multimodal Essay due • Readings/Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>There There</i> ◦ <i>Let's Talk</i>, chapter 4: The Role of Argument in Our Lives |

| When | Topic | Notes |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Week 6: Tuesday, 2/24 | Letter to Editor | Letter to Editor essay assigned Readings/Viewings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's Talk, chapter 5: Developing Academic Habits of Mind |
| Week 6: Thursday, 2/26 | Letter to Editor | Readings/Viewings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paolo Freire. "The Banking Concept of Education" (digital copy available on Canvas) |
| Week 7: Tuesday, 3/3 | Letter to Editor | Reading/Viewings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hooks, bell. excerpt from the book <i>Teaching to Transgress</i> (digital copy available on Canvas) |
| Week 7: Thursday, 3/5 | Letter to Editor | Readings/Viewings tbd |
| Week 8: Tuesday, 3/10 | Letter to Editor | Reading/Activities tbd <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There There</i> activities |
| Week 8: Thursday, 3/12 | Letter to Editor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline to upload first draft of Letter to Editor to Canvas: class time on Thursday, 3/12. Peer Review of Letter to Editor during class on Thursday, 3/12. |
| Week 9: Tuesday, 3/17 | Letter to Editor | Reading/Activities tbd |
| Week 9: Thursday, 3/19 | Letter to Editor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft of Letter to Editor due |
| Week 10: Tuesday, 3/24 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text assigned |
| Week 10: Thursday, 3/26 | *There There* + Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion: the conclusion of <i>There There</i> Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text assigned |

| When | Topic | Notes |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Week 11: Monday 3/30 - Tuesday, 4/3 | Spring Break | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Break: no classes |
| Week 12: Tuesday, 4/7 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 11: "Summarizing and Responding" from <i>Let's Talk</i> |
| Week 12: Thursday, 4/9 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read "Visualizing the Civil Rights Movement: Kelly Ingram Park, Birmingham, AL" (https://civildiscourse-historyblog.com/blog/2019/2/4/visualizing-the-civil-rights-movement-kelly-ingram-park-birmingham-al). |
| Week 13: Tuesday, 4/14 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 10: "Analyzing" (https://nerd.wwnorton.com/nerd/333207/r/goto/cfi/74/4?lti=true) from <i>Let's Talk</i>. • In class activity: Creating a group document -- Rhetorical Analysis of Ingram Park, Birmingham, AL. |
| Week 13: Thursday, 4/16 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In class activity: Creating a group document -- Rhetorical Analysis of Ingram Park, Birmingham, AL. |
| Week 14: Tuesday, 4/21 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline to upload first draft of Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text to Canvas • Peer Review of Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text during class on Thursday |
| Week 14: Thursday, 4/23 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin reading "Letter from Birmingham Jail," by Martin Luther King |
| Week 15: Tuesday, 4/28 | Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft of Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text due • Finish reading "Letter from Birmingham Jail," by Martin Luther King |
| Week 15: Thursday, 4/30 | Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection | Readings/Viewings tbd |
| Week 16: Tuesday, 5/5 | Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection | Activities related to Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection |
| Week 16: Thursday, 5/7 | Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection | Activities related to Writing Portfolio and Self-Reflection |

| When | Topic | Notes |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Finals week (Tuesday, 5/19) | Culminating Activity of the Semester | Writing Porfolio and Self-Reflection due on Canvas by 12 Midnight on Tuesday, 5/19 |