

Critical Thinking and Writing

ENGL 2

Spring 2026 Section 05 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/29/2026

Contact Information

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Office Hours

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:00-1:00pm, and by appointment.

Clark Hall 408E

We can also meet virtually on Zoom when it's more comfortable for your schedules as well.

Course Information

Finding Happiness: Searching for Joy

English 2 is designed to further our understanding and skills in critical thinking and university-level writing, which we have previously learned in English 1A. Similar to it, we continue to focus upon on the craft and expertise of this art by learning about the nuances and strategies that make for beautiful and elegant writing at this elevated stage. We will also be focusing on readings to further grow and mature our critical thinking skills. I will teach you to be the most advanced critical thinkers and writers you have been thus far.

As we satisfy the learning objectives of this course, we will compose a variety of writing exercises and assignments. We will learn how to further compose personal writing, learn about the importance of visual rhetoric and how it's more pertinent in our lives today more than ever, discover about argumentation and research, including how to ascertain what scholarly sources are, and navigate our library website to find them to include in our research papers as well.

We will also foster the growth of our fundamental skill of close reading and how to analyze texts in smart and elevated ways. In this course, we will be discovering and understanding the concept of happiness. There are many that are relevant to our formative experiences as college students, including discovering

and considering things that truly bring us joy. Perhaps you find joy in reading, playing video games, visiting natural and scenic places, sharing celebrations with your loved ones. Maybe you participate in hobbies and extracurriculars, such as art, dancing, cooking and baking, playing sports, and so much more. We will aim to further consider all that brings us joy, and why they matter so much to us.

This course will largely focus on readings, discourse, and clear, cohesive writing. We will learn how to encounter and enter these texts, discuss how and why they are written, and write our own personal, intimate, and important papers responding to what we have found to be inspiring. We will mature our progress as university-level critical thinkers and writers throughout it all.

Course Description and Requisites

Focuses on the relationship between language and logic in composing arguments. Students learn various methods of effective reasoning and appropriate rhetorical strategies to help them invent, demonstrate, and express arguments clearly, logically, and persuasively.

Satisfies 1B. Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of GE Area 1A with a grade of C- or better.

Grading: Letter Graded

Note(s): ENGL 2 is not open to students who successfully completed ENGL 1B.

* Classroom Protocols

ENGL 2

This course is open to all students needing to fulfill GE Area 1B: Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3). It is not open to students who have successfully completed ENGL 1B.

Prerequisite: ENGL 1A or Stretch English (with a grade of C- or better)

Course Content

Diversity: SJSU studies include an emphasis on diversity. You will engage in integrated reading, Writing, and oral assignments to construct your own arguments on complex issues (such as diversity and ethnicity, class and social equality) that generate meaningful public debate. Readings for the course will include writers of different ethnicities, genders, and socio-economic classes.

Writing: You will write a series of essays informed by research and articulating fully developed arguments about complex issues. Assignments emphasize those skills and activities in writing and thinking that produce the persuasive argument and the critical essay, each of which demands analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Writing assignments give you repeated practice in prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. This class requires a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Logic: You will learn methods of argument analysis, both rhetorical and logical, that will allow you to identify logical structures (such as warrants, evidence, qualification, rebuttal; enthymemes and syllogisms) and distinguish common logical fallacies.

Reading: In addition to being writing intensive, ENGL 2 is also a reading course. You will read a variety of critical and argumentative texts to help develop your skills for understanding the logical structure of argumentative writing.

Oral: You will be presenting your arguments orally to class both as an individual and as part of a group.

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.

Time Commitment

Success in ENGL 2 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 2, 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.

Program Policies

First-Year Writing policies are listed at the following website:
<https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php>
[\(https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php\)](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

Goals and Assignments:

We will complete regular readings, discussion posts, and assignments throughout this course. I always share prompts via Canvas and communicate them in classes as well. Please take a look at the announcements and modules throughout term, as more will be visible and accessible as the weeks progress.

Canvas and Technology:

If you have not already done so, please visit SJSU's Canvas software. Here you will be able to find a special site devoted exclusively to our course. On this site, you will find files containing this syllabus and other class handouts as they become available. Additionally, we will regularly use the Discussion Board. You will also be able to communicate with fellow classmates, providing insight, answers or compounding questions when necessary. I will keep track of your participation and may use some of the material, including any linked texts, you and your classmates post as a starting place for in-class discussions.

Writing Portfolio:

At the end of the term, you will turn in a writing portfolio for English 2. We will discuss details closer to when this is due, which is around the same time for your final paper.

Participation Policy:

This is an active-learning and very engaging class, so please participate in consistent attendance. We will be completing regular in-class activities for each of these larger assignments. In order to receive credit for these essays, students must participate and complete the in-class writing exercises and drafting portion.

Students who have missing portions of the in-class writing materials may not receive credit for the final versions of these assignments even if they are completed.

Late Policy:

Assignments are due on the dates specified. Some late assignments may only receive partial credit for completion if approved beforehand for appropriate reasons.

A.I. Policy:

We are here to genuinely learn how to become the best writers possible. To do this, we have to write our own materials. Assignments that are completed using any generative A.I. tools may not receive any credit.

University Policies:

The following link contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, student success resources, etc. <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area 1B: Critical Thinking and Writing

Area 1B courses develop students' understanding of the relationship of language to logic. By engaging students in complex issues requiring critical thinking and effective argumentation, 1B courses develop students' abilities to research and analyze important topics and to construct their own arguments on issues that generate meaningful public debate and deliberation. Courses include explicit instruction and practice in inductive and deductive reasoning as well as identification of formal and informal fallacies of language and thought. Completion of Area 1A (Written Communication I) with a minimum grade of C- is a prerequisite for enrollment in Area 1B. Completion of Area 1B with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area 1B Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area 1B course, students should be able to:

1. locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way, including through library research; and integrate research findings into oral and written arguments through appropriate citation and quotation;
2. use a range of rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view;
3. identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the contexts of arguments; and
4. use inductive and deductive logic to construct valid, evidence-supported arguments and draw valid conclusions.

Writing requirement

This class requires a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

Required Texts and Resources:

1. Course readings will be provided for you throughout the semester.
2. Kaag, John and Jonathan Van Belle. *Thinking Through Writing: A Guide to Becoming a Better Writer & Thinker*. (ISBN: 978-069124599).
3. Parfitt, Matthew and Dawn Skorczewski. *Pursuing Happiness: A Bedford Spotlight Reader, Second Edition*. (ISBN: 978-1319056322).
4. Printing and viewing resources for course readings, videos, assignments, and other material that are posted on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Reading Assignments:

In this class, we will be reading a series of complex texts. *They may often be challenging, so you should be prepared to read them more than once if necessary to fully understand their concepts.* Some of these reading assignments may focus on the mechanics, techniques and notions of language, rhetoric, and writing. These will be valuable in our discourse and practice of constructing, drafting, finalizing, and revising essays. Reading assignments are due on the day they appear on the course calendar and schedule. Please be responsible and do the readings beforehand.

Writing Assignments:

Each of the three essays will be examples of polished, revised versions that have been peer- and instructor-reviewed. Essays should have a clear and concise thesis, a well-organized paragraph structure, and proper formatting.

1. Happiness Narrative Reflection (2-3 pages)
2. Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project (Presentation and Essay #1, 3-4 pages)
3. Synthesis & Argumentation Paper (Essay #2, 4-6 pages)
4. Final Research Paper (Essay #3, 5-7 pages)
5. Discussion Posts
6. Writing Portfolio
7. Activities and Exercises

Grading Information

Class Grades:

1. Happiness Narrative Reflection (2-3 pages): 10%
2. Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project (Presentation and Essay #1, 4-6 pages): 15%
3. Synthesis & Argumentation Paper (Essay #2, 4-6 pages): 15%

4. Final Research Paper (Essay #3, 5-7 pages): 20%
5. Discussion Posts: 5%
6. In-class Participation, Activities, and Exercises: 35%

We will be completing regular in-class activities for each of these larger assignments. In order to receive credit for these essays, students must participate and complete the in-class writing exercises and drafting portion. Students who have missing portions of the in-class writing materials may not receive credit for the final versions of these assignments even if they are completed.

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

University Policies

Per [University Policy 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) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Course Calendar and Schedule:

This is a tentative schedule for this semester. Reading and writing assignments can and likely will change to better suit the needs of our class discussions. Please be sure to attend class regularly and visit our course information on Canvas to note any changes to the syllabus.

**In order to preserve course flexibility, only major assignment dates appear in the calendar below. A more detailed assignment calendar may be provided as the semester progresses, and these calendar dates may be adjusted. Additionally, if and when schedule permits, we will try to visit the university's Writing*

Center and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

***In the schedule below, I have detailed a suggested and advanced reading and writing schedule for you. It is purposefully very ambitious to help you learn and grow to your full potential. I encourage you to read at this accelerated pace and dive deeply into these texts and ideas. Because they are indeed deep, we will focus on a selection of them and read at a much more expanded pace within the classroom, discussing major points along the way. This does not mean we are not intellectually covering all of these works and ideas comprehensively within the scope of this course; you and I can discuss any text in robust detail during office hours and conferences. Furthermore, as you do read ahead, if there is a text you would like us to focus upon in class, please let me know and I will make sure we do just that.*

Week 1:

January 22

Introduction of Course & Syllabus

Student Introductions

Week 2:

January 27

Introduce Favorite Work of Writing assignment

Continue Student Introductions

January 29

Review and present on Favorite Work of Writing

Discuss: Writing from the Self: The "I" in Writing and Point of View in a Rhetorical Stance

Start Concentration on Chapter 1: What is Happiness?

Read and discuss: Voltaire, "The Good Brahmin"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 5

Week 3:

February 3

Read and discuss: His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler, *The Sources of Happiness*

In-class Activity

February 5

Introduce Happiness Narrative Reflection

Draft work: Prewriting of Happiness Narrative Reflection

Discuss: Integrating Your Interests and Acknowledging Multiple Perspectives

Read and discuss: Martha C. Nussbaum, "Who is the Happy Warrior? Philosophy Poses Questions to Psychology"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 5

Week 4:

February 10

Draft work: Happiness Narrative Reflection

Discuss: Identifying a Critical Debate, Close Reading, and Analytic Questions

February 12

Discuss: Thesis Formation and Defining a Strong Thesis, the Practice of a Working Thesis

Read and discuss: Darrin M. McMahon, "From the Happiness of Virtue to the Virtue of Happiness: 400 BC - AD 1780"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 1

Week 5:

February 17

Draft work: Peer Review of Happiness Narrative Reflection

Continue discussion of Thesis Statements

February 19

Happiness Narrative Reflection due

Read and discuss: Sissela Bok, "Illusion"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 1

Week 6:

February 24

Introduce Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project

Start Concentration on Chapter 2: What Makes People Happy?

Discuss: The Concept of Visual Rhetoric

Discuss: Forming & Structuring essays, Argumentative Structures, and Methodology

February 26

Continue discussion of Visual Rhetoric

Discuss: Outlining and Introductions, Hooks and Motivations

Read and discuss: Michael Argyle and Peter Hills, "The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 3

Week 7:

March 3

In-class activity on Visual Rhetoric

Discuss: The Mechanics of Structure

Draft Work: In-class activity on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project

March 5

Draft Work: In-class activity on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project

Discuss: Transitions and Topic Sentences

Read and discuss: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "If We Are So Rich, Why Aren't We Happy?"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 3

Week 8:

March 10

Discuss: Audience and Techniques for Peer Review

Read and discuss: Hal E. Hershfield, Cassie Mogilner, and Uri Barnea, "People Who Choose Time Over Money Are Happier"

Draft Work: In-class activity on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Project

March 12

Discuss: Peer Review at its Best

Read and discuss: Sonjya Lyubomirsky, "How Happy Are You and Why?"

Start Concentration on Chapter 3: Do We Deserve to Be Happy?

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 4

Week 9:

March 17

Start presentations on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Projects

Read and discuss: John Keats, "Ode to Melancholy"

March 19

Continue presentations on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Projects

Read and discuss: Laren Stover, "The Case for Melancholy"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 4

Week 10:

March 24

Continue presentations on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Projects

Read and discuss: Naomi Shihab Nye, "Kindness"

March 26

Continue presentations on Visual Rhetorical Analysis Group Projects (if needed)

Visual Rhetorical Group Projects Due

Introduce Synthesis & Argumentation Paper

In-class activity

Discuss: Argumentation: Premises, Conclusions, and Inferences

Read and discuss: The New Economics Foundation, "The Happy Planet Index"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 2

**Spring Recess—March 30 - April 3: Academic Holidays*

Week 11:

April 7

Start Concentration on Chapter 4: Can We Create Our Own Happiness?

Read and discuss: Gretchen Rubin, "July: Buy Some Happiness"

Draft work: Prewriting of Synthesis and Argumentation paper

April 9

Read and discuss: Lucky Strike Cigarettes "Be Happy, Go Lucky"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 2

Week 12:

April 14

Draft work: Writing of Synthesis and Argumentation paper

Read and discuss: Lucille Clifton, "won't you celebrate with me"

April 16

Discuss: Scholarly Sources, Strategies on Summary, Paraphrase, Quote, and Rogeting

Read and discuss: Noelle Oxenhander, "Ah, But the Breezes..."

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 6

Week 13:

April 21

Draft work: Peer Review of Synthesis and Argumentation paper

Read and discuss: Paul E. Jose, Bee T. Lim, and Fred B. Bryant, "Does Savoring Increase Happiness? A Daily Diary Study"

April 23

Synthesis & Argumentation Due

Introduce Final Critical Paper

Discuss: Integrating Sources and Evidence

Start Concentration on Chapter 5: Does Technology Make Us Happier?

Read and discuss: Lynn Stuart Parramore, "Happy All the Time"

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 6

Week 14:

April 28

Draft work: Prewriting of Final Critical Paper

Read and discuss: James McWilliams, "Saving the Self in the Age of the Selfie"

April 30

Draft work: Writing of Final Critical Paper

Discuss: Editing and Revision

Read and discuss: Selections on Happiness

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 7

Week 15:

May 5

In-class activity

Discuss: Grammar, Syntax, and Active Voice

Start Student Conferences

Draft work: Peer Review of Final Critical Paper

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapters 7 & 8

May 7

In-class activity on Writing Portfolio

Discuss: Crafting Conclusion Paragraphs for Essays, Strategies for Satisfying Conclusion Paragraphs and Completing Essays, The Perfect Essay

Review Learning Objectives: How far have we come and where do we go from here?

Wrap-up of course

Read and discuss: *Thinking Through Writing* Chapter 8

Week 16:

May (Finals Week)

Final Critical Paper due

Continue Student Conferences

**Classes for the Spring 2026 semester end on Monday, 11 May 2026.*