

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 21 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/26/2026

Contact Information

instructor(s):	Dr. Anne F. Walker
office location:	Dr. Walker's 2026 zoom room (Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88423804462)
email:	anne.walker@sjsu.edu - I prefer email over Canvas messaging as email can embed links and images
student hours:	T/Th 1-2pm by appointment (for best results please email 24 hours in advance) or other times by request. Where: in Dr. Walker's 2025 zoom room (Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/88423804462)
class days/time:	Mondays and Wednesdays, 3-4:15
classroom:	Clark Building 306

Course Information

Finnish schools excel, with worldwide recognition, through the use of less homework, classes that go all year, and shorter class time. [This.](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/10-reasons-why-finlands-education-system-is-the-best-in-the-world) (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/10-reasons-why-finlands-education-system-is-the-best-in-the-world>) [this.](https://www.educationcorner.com/finland-education-system/) (<https://www.educationcorner.com/finland-education-system/>) and [this.](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/why-are-finlands-schools-successful-49859555/) (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/why-are-finlands-schools-successful-49859555/>) have details. Something to think about.

This class is meant to give you skills to support all of your other classes and, in keeping with the ideal, is designed to be front-loaded, leaving the end of each semester as light-lifting. If you keep up you will have spaciousness at the end for other courses' finals. In-class work supports graded assignments. Much of this class will focus on how you best learn, digest, and express. Some of it will focus on naturalizing good essay practices that will help you through your University career.

Counter storytelling is central to our class. Counter storytelling helps students feel safe and seen in the classroom space. It says, "you being you is crucial to all of your activities now and future." It builds community now and in future paths. Who we are as people not only defines how we are in school, but what we want and need in relation to architecture, urban planning, gardening, policy, medicine and so forth. All these are in relation to our stories as our narratives help define our needs. Counter storytelling creates inclusivity and helps to support connection/importance to/of ancestors. Counter storytelling works against dominant hegemonic ideals that tell marginalized people to leave personal and cultural experiences outside the door.

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

a note about questions: It is always best to ask questions openly in class time. If you are thinking a question, chances are that seven other students will benefit from you asking the question out loud in class. Please do ask questions: it helps everyone.

attendance: It just is better for you and the class if you come. Attendance and participation connects you to your peers, your teacher, and the collaborative processing mind of the group. It will offer interesting new ways to learn. I will, also, take attendance. Still...

... if you feel sick: stay home. Get better. Check the week's Canvas page for work. Email me (with a clear subject heading referring to absence) to let me know what's up and how I can help. Coordinate completion of activities and assignments with your peers. Complete work listed online. We are in strange times, let's keep healthy to meet them.

consultations: There are 2 consultations. Each consultation is weighted like any of your "participation" assignments. All you have to do is show up. Not only do I look forward to meeting with you, but I'm trying to help you to get comfortable with showing up to office hours. It will help your academic progress in all classes and in professional settings. It's a secret code to success. And (low-stakes) practice helps.

AI/ChatGPT: in many ways, the act of writing is a way to think further on a topic and to organize or clarify those thoughts. The connection between writing and thinking is crucial to your development as a communicator, and it is a skill that will serve you well in all your future endeavors. Using AI to respond to essay prompts is cheating: it is cheating you out of the education you are paying for. If I see that you used AI for any significant percentage of any written assignment, I will not provide feedback, nor will you receive a passing grade for the assignment. Repeated infractions will result in a plagiarism report to the University.

plagiarism: success in this class will be measured by how well you understand the materials as presented in lectures or through class discussion. Repeating material found on secondary sources online is not acceptable, unless you are conducting research and providing proper documentation, and it will result in failure for the assignment, and possible failure in the course. Further action may be taken by the University per [F15-7](#).

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>).

Course Goals

The overall course goal is to explore what it is to be human, and to write about it.

On the technical side, during counter storytelling we'll work on personal and analytic essays. Through the choose your own adventure you'll create a persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay. The final portfolio enhances expository essay writing skills.

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

written texts: *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969-1980* by Lucille Clifton, ISBN-10: 0918526590; *The Writer's Diet: A Guide to Fit Prose* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing), 2nd Edition, by Helen Sword, ISBN-10: 022635198X. [Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969-1980 \(https://csu-sjsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CALS_SJO/tu4ck5/alma991001751489702919\)](https://csu-sjsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CALS_SJO/tu4ck5/alma991001751489702919) can be accessed electronically through the MLK library. The *Good Woman* title supports unlimited users. The MLK library is working on getting *The Writer's Diet* similarly available.

Adobe Creative Cloud: you have free access to it through SJSU. We will get you signed up and will be using it through the semester.

when to complete readings: Do the reading, and write your reflection, before the date listed in Canvas as the due date. The material is what we will talk about in class the next day. Be prepared to participate.

a note about texts: At times these texts may seem challenging, at times entertaining. Move through them as a form of investigation. You are not expected to master any texts in this class. The anticipation is that you will explore them, and share your findings with your peers.

trigger warning: Please note that sometimes projects and class discussions include material of a sensitive nature. In this course, we may encounter materials that differ from and perhaps challenge your ideas, beliefs, and understanding of reality. Please come and discuss any issues about such material with me.

Course Requirements and Assignments

assignment	GELO	point value
The easiest way to see assignment dates is on the syllabus navigation page. Each week we will use page that starts with "week" and then the correct week number as a primary organizing tool.	1 - 4	40
participation		
reading reflections	1 - 5	10
memoir interview project - counter storytelling - personal essay	1 - 5	10
memoir interview project analysis - counter storytelling - analytic essay	1 - 5	10
choose your own adventure - persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay	1 - 5	10
feedback to peers	1 - 5	10
final portfolio - expository essay	1 - 5	10

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✓ Grading Information

Like many writing teachers at SJSU, I utilize minimum grading. For a description of this philosophy you might check out [Promising Approaches: Grading Scales and Equity in Physics](#). This class uses low-stakes process-based grading, the idea being, by doing the work you learn and your learning is the focus of this class. Each assignment receives a grade connected to the associated rubric. Often I also add comments in the "Assignment Comments" in Canvas. Canvas calculates your grade. More about my use of low-stakes process-based grading is [here](#).

grading criteria:

- "A" range describes you completing the course work thoroughly and on time. It means you have presented detailed original ideas that clearly responded to the prompts. It reflects you giving yourself the most abundant opportunities of staying in the flow of idea development, enjoying collaboration, and learning through the class. You probably feel really good about the work and learning you did.
- "B" range demonstrates good completion in the same categories as an "A," but it also notes some late, incomplete, or partial work. This means you didn't get as much out of the class as you would have with more engagement, but you were still largely participatory. You probably developed your skills and had some fun.
- "C" range shows you did enough work with prompts and principles to pass, but frequent late work, incomplete participation, and/or missing assignments were likely a barrier to many benefits offered by the curriculum and community.
- "D" range demonstrates minimal engagement.
- An "F" is due to a significant lack of submitted material and participation.

Letter Percentage and Associated Grade: A+ 97-100, A 94-96, A- 90-93, B+ 87-89, B 84-86, B- 80-83, C+ 77-79, C 74-76, C- 70-73, D+ 67-69, D 64-66, D- 60-63, F 0-65. By checking the "Grades" module you should be able to track your progress. Please do ask me for updates any time.

I love assigning A's. Just keep up with the work, and do it fully, to get there.

For late work policy and other details please read [extra details about grading](#).

If you use AI in an assignment where we have not discussed and noted it, you may receive a failing grade. Undocumented AI use is a form of plagiarism.

That said, we will explore how AI can be fruitfully used in class through explicit exercises and tracking use.

Using any idea that is not yours, without noting its source, is plagiarism. Don't do it. Note your sources.

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) (<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

keep attentive to Canvas and class for syllabus changes

Week	Activity	some notes and key reference points	Readings to be completed by the week's start if not otherwise noted
Week 1: no class			
Week 2: January 26	welcome, syllabus review, hello video		
Week 2: January 28	personal essay - developing counter storytelling and interview project, favorite writing place	start counter storytelling	as group start to look at <i>Good Woman</i> "Caroline and son" for reflection
Week 3: February 2	personal essay - developing counter storytelling and interview project	character analysis class agreements	<i>Good Woman</i> "Caroline and son"

Week 3: February 4	personal essay - developing counter storytelling and interview project	thematic analysis	<i>Good Woman</i> "Lucy" and "Gene"
Week 4: February 9	personal essay - developing counter storytelling and interview project	rhetorical analysis	<i>Good Woman</i> "Samuel" and "Thelma"
Week 4: February 11	personal essay - writing and editing your stories	remote study hall	
Week 5: February 16	personal essay - writing and editing your stories		
Week 5: February 18	personal essay - writing and editing your stories		paramedic syntax
Week 6: February 23	analytic essay - interview project analysis		
Week 6: February 25	analytic essay - interview project analysis		

Week 7: March 2	analytic essay - interview project analysis		verbal verve syntax
Week 7: March 4	analytic essay - interview project analysis		
Week 8: March 9	analytic essay - interview project analysis		
Week 8: March 11	choose your own adventure	remote study hall	noun density syntax
Week 9: March 16	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure		
Week 9: March 18	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure		
Week 10: March 23	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure	living in others' joy	

Week 10: March 25	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure		prepositional podge syntax
Week 11: March 30 – April 3	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure	spring break	
Week 12: April 6	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure	actions that feel human	
Week 12: April 8	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure	remote study hall	
Week 13: April 13	persuasive, argumentative, multimodal, collaborative essay - choose your own adventure		

Week 13: April 15	expository essay - final portfolio - overview	start final essay	ad-dictions syntax
Week 14: April 20	expository essay - final portfolio - organizing files and prompt analysis		
Week 14: April 22	expository essay - pre-writing		
Week 15: April 27	expository essay - pre-writing		
Week 15: April 29	expository essay - structural editing		
Week 16: May 4	reflections, and course evaluations		
Week 16: May 6	consultations, reflections, and course evaluations	remote consultation	waste words syntax

week 17: May 11	consultations, reflections, and course evaluations	remote consultation all work (excluding cumulative project) handed in by midnight	
week 17: May 13	University requires cumulative project due by end of exam period: 3:25pm		
week 17: May 17	all grades posted in Canvas for student review		
week 18: May 18	student's must submit any requests for clarification or correction on Canvas grades to professor by end of day		
week 18: May 22	grades due for the university		