

Seminar in Composition Studies Section 01

ENGL 259

Fall 2024 4 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 09/30/2024

Class time: W, 7:00-9:45PM

Class location: Sweeney Hall (SH) 229

Office location: FOB 111

Office hours: T, 4:30-5:30pm; TH, 2:00-3:00pm; or by appointment

In this course, we will engage with current approaches to studying and teaching writing. Specifically, we will examine perspectives about writing that inform its instruction: what writing is, how it is studied, how it is taught, how it should be taught, and whether or not it even can be taught. Our overarching goal will be to understand writing/composition as a complex, situated act in order to chart possibilities for developing and improving our work as teachers and scholars. The course will focus on situating issues associated with teaching writing in theoretical frameworks of rhetoric and composition studies, and we will discuss practical teaching issues, as well.

Contact Information

It can sometimes take me a day or two to answer emails, and I rarely check, much less answer, at night or over the weekend. It's not a "you" thing; it's a "me" thing. I'm always trying to juggle work, family, and personal responsibilities, and one of the tools I have at my disposal is boundaries. If you need a speedy reply, you can try to call my office (I'm often there M-F, 8:00am-5:00pm), stop by office hours, or let me know in your subject line that you need a timely response.

Professor: Dr. Ryan Skinnell

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Office: FOB 111

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Website: <https://www.RyanSkinnell.com> (<https://www.RyanSkinnell.com>)

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Office Hours

Tuesday, 4:30-5:30pm; Thursday, 2:00-3:00pm; or by appointment
FOB 111 or on Zoom (by request)

I plan to be in my office during our office hours, so please feel free to drop by. In general, it is preferable if you let me know you're coming so I don't step out for a walk or to make copies when I know you're coming. It also helps me make time/space for all my students. But if you just want to pop in, do it! If you'd prefer a Zoom meeting, just let me know so I can set it up.

I'm also available **BY APPOINTMENT**. Unless I have another specific commitment, I'm usually pretty flexible about meeting. Send me a message, and we can set up a time. You can do this even if all you want to do is shoot the breeze!

Course Information

English 259 is a graduate seminar in Composition Theory. The course objectives are:

- To analyze and evaluate competing descriptions of the writing process.
- To recognize and evaluate the range of approaches to teaching composition.
- To examine assumptions underlying current theory and practice in writing instruction.
- To explore assumptions and implications of composition and rhetorical research.
- To identify key problems and issues surrounding current research in composition and rhetoric.

The main questions guiding our reading and discussions this semester, and some of the fundamental questions motivating research in this field, are:

- How do people write?
- How do people learn how to write?
- How should we teach writing?
- What are the consequences of teaching writing one way versus another?
- What are the consequences of writing and texts in the world? In other words, what do texts "do" in the world? Why are they important?

And by the end of the semester, you will develop tentative answers of your own to these and many other questions.

Course Description and Requisites

Study of current approaches to composition.

Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

* Classroom Protocols

This course can be demanding. The reading load is heavy, the material is challenging, and course requirements are substantial.

That said, COVID times continue to be what COVID times are, so we're going to need manage our expectations appropriately. We're going to try to be like wolves (*Canis lupus*)—we'll work together as a pack, leave no one behind, occasionally fight a Kodiak bear (*Ursus arctos middendorffi*).

During most class periods, we will discuss readings, do group activities, and hear presentations. I strongly encourage students to visit me in my office hours to discuss course materials and/or assignments throughout the semester—especially in the event that course expectations are overwhelming or confusing.

It's an English course, I know, but let's do some quick math. ENGL 259 is a 4-unit course. That means we are signing up to do a minimum of 12 hours of study per week just for this class. 2½ hours will be class time. The remaining 9½ hours a week, you will work on your own or with your peers to prepare for class and complete assignments. I have designed the work using this math to guide us. I will refer to it often to help you manage this workload over the semester.

Please note:

Sometimes projects and discussions include material that can be contentious and even potentially upsetting. We may encounter materials that differ from and perhaps challenge our ideas, beliefs, and understanding of reality. Students are encouraged to discuss issues about such materials with me. In class, discussion is welcome and encouraged, but comments found to be intentionally offensive, disrespectful, or antagonistic will not be tolerated.

Please also note:

If you have special needs or accommodations requests, see me as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in forfeiting accommodations to which you're entitled. But even if you're not *formally* entitled to accommodations, talk to me anyway so we can make this an environment in which you can learn. My priority is a learning environment conducive to everyone's needs.

Other Available SJSU Resources

The University provides all students several resources to help us successfully learn in this course. The services provided include counseling and psychological care, mentoring and tutoring, access to food and housing, to technology, and writing support.

- [Accessible Education Center](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Peer Connections](#)
- [SJSU Cares](#)
- [Spartan Food Pantry](#)

- [Student Technology Resources](#)
- [Writing Center](#)
- [Other Campus Resources](#)

Course Goals

- 1) explore and evaluate a range of approaches to studying and teaching writing
- 2) situate writing in relation to values and expectations that teachers, students, and outside influences bring to the scene of instruction
- 3) engage in productive discussions about teaching and studying writing
- 4) articulate theoretically informed goals and objectives for writing classrooms
- 5) practice modes of academic inquiry

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

How Does This Work Contribute to Your Graduate Studies in English?

Rhetoric & composition is one of the many sub-disciplines included in English Studies, alongside other prominent sub-disciplines such as literature and creative writing. This course asks us to develop and begin to apply expertise in rhetoric & composition as we contemplate how to teach and study writing. While this course is not explicitly about the content in the rhetoric & composition portion of the MA exam, it will be helpful for studying to pass that section for students who select it.

Looking at the English graduate program learning objectives below, it is worth asking how rhetoric & composition is like, but also not like, other elements of the program:

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to
 - a. organize and present material in a cogent fashion,
 - b. formulate and defend original arguments,
 - c. employ effectively the language of their discipline and
 - d. write under time constraints.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;
 - d) write under time constraints.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

Adler-Kassner, Linda and Elizabeth Wardle, Eds. Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies (Classroom Edition). Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-1607325772.

Coxwell-Teague, Deborah and Ronald F. Lunsford. First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice. Anderson, South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-1602355187.

Reznizki, Michal and David Coad, Eds. *Dynamic Activities for First-Year Composition: 96 Ways to Immerse, Inspire, and Captivate Students*. Champagne, Illinois: NCTE, 2023. ISBN: 978-0814100936.

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper, Kurt Schick. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford, 2014. ISBN: 978-0199922161.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignment	Learning Outcomes
Teaching Portfolio	2, 3, 4
Professional Development Activities (2 total)	1, 2, 3, 5
Midterm Evaluation	3, 4
Chapter Presentation/Dynamic Teaching Showcase	3, 5
Reading responses (13 total)	1, 3, 4, 5
Participation / daily writing / in-class work	1, 3, 5
Final Reflection	2, 3, 4, 5

Participation / daily writing / in-class work

For a class like this one, much of the learning happens in class. Therefore, it is imperative you be in class every day and participate. Class participation entails: (1) demonstrating that you've completed the readings/assignments, (2) contributing to class discussions, and (3) completing in-class activities and assignments.

Reading Responses

Your reading responses are primarily reflective writing. The prompt is simple: "What value did you get from the readings and/or what did it echo for you?" Addressing this question could take an infinite number of forms, but the goal is to think with writers, scholars, and/or class community members in order for you to put yourself and your experiences in relation to the course materials, including those you might feel little to no interest in.

Please post your responses on Canvas by **11:59pm on Tuesday evening**. You will earn full credit for a good faith effort submitted by the deadline. By “good-faith effort,” I mean the submission responds appropriately to the assignment and does not violate the academic integrity policy. A post that I judge to not be a “good-faith effort” may receive partial credit.

Professional development activities

There are 2 professional development activities [[generative AI evaluation \(https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/assignments/7137091\)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/assignments/7137091)], microlessons for Early Start] that you'll complete asynchronously in lieu of our class meeting on 9/25. We'll talk more about the rationales and goals for each in class.

Chapter Presentation/Dynamic Teaching Showcase

If you did not lead a reading discussion weeks 2 or 3, then you will complete this presentation at the end of the semester. Each of you will be assigned one chapter from Tate, et al.'s *Guide to Composition Pedagogies* to read and report to the class about. In combination, you will select one activity from Reznizki & Coad's, *Dynamic Activities for First-Year Composition* to illustrate the pedagogy you're presenting. Due to time constraints, you will not need to teach the activity, but rather, you'll explain it briefly and how it helps to illustrate your pedagogy. **NOTE:** I don't know if or how well this is going to work. If you have trouble with your chapter, trouble finding a suitable activity, or other concerns, I strongly encourage you to visit me in office hours. I promise you we can figure something out.

Your presentation should be approximately 12-15 minutes long.

Teaching Portfolio

The major project in this class will be a teaching portfolio. It will include: (1) a teaching philosophy, (2) a teaching CV, (3) a writing course syllabus, and (4) an active learning lesson plan. It may optionally include other materials, such as a writing assignment prompt, activity descriptions, or a daily class plan. We'll talk more about each of these components during class.

Final Examination or Evaluation

Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment. The culminating activity for ENGL 259 is a Final Reflection.

Engl 259 Course Goals

- to explore and evaluate a range of approaches to studying and teaching composition
- to situate composition in relation to values and expectations that teachers, students, and outside influences bring to the scene of instruction
- to engage in productive discussions about teaching and studying writing
- to articulate theoretically informed goals and objectives for writing classrooms
- to practice modes of academic inquiry

Prompt: How did your work in English 259 reflect (or not reflect) the learning goals for the course as outlined on the syllabus? Please use specific evidence from your assignments, class activities, and/or extracurricular activities.

This assignment is *not* an invitation to tell me how great the class was or how amazing I am. Rather, your job is to demonstrate that you understand and have achieved the learning goals associated with the course. In other words, it's an argument about you and your learning.

Your final reflection can be NO LONGER than 600 words!

✓ Grading Information

You are guaranteed a B if you:

1. attend class typically—generally arriving on time and not missing more than three weeks' worth of classes (exceptions may be made in extenuating circumstance *if* students communicate with the professor);
2. meet criteria and due dates for all major assignments (i.e., Professional Development Activities, Presentation/ Dynamic Teaching Showcase, Midterm Evaluation, Teaching Portfolio);
3. complete most discussion board assignments—not missing more than two—at least a baseline level of engagement;
4. generally participate in class exercises and activities;
5. give thoughtful peer feedback during workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g., sharing papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, on-line discussion boards, answering peer questions);
6. make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
7. copy-edit revisions of main assignments to generally conform to the conventions appropriate to the purpose, genre, and audience;
8. submit your Final Reflection.

In this system, you can earn the grade of B entirely on the basis of what you do—on your conscientious effort and participation. The grade of B does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your work with the exception that your work must meet my expectations for the quality of “baseline” engagement. Grades higher than B, however, do rest on my judgment of quality. To earn higher grades you must complete the assignments at both a higher level of (1) effort and participation and (2) quality.

You are guaranteed an A if you:

1. attend class reliably—consistently arriving on time and not missing more than two weeks' worth of classes (exceptions may be made in extenuating circumstance *if* students communicate with the professor);
2. meet criteria and due dates for all major assignments (i.e., Professional Development Activities, Presentation/ Dynamic Teaching Showcase, Midterm Evaluation, Teaching Portfolio) at a high level of

- quality;
3. consistently participate in class exercises and activities;
 4. complete all discussion board assignments at a high level of engagement;
 5. give thoughtful peer feedback during workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g., sharing papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, on-line discussion boards, answering peer questions);
 6. make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
 7. copy-edit revisions of main assignments to generally conform to the conventions appropriate to the purpose, genre, and audience;
 8. submit your Final Reflection at a high level of quality.

You may earn a B+ if you meet all the criteria for a B at a level of quality that I judge in sum to be high, but you do not meet the criteria for an A. You may earn an A- if you meet all the criteria for an A but do so at a level of quality that I judge in sum to be not high.

As an instructor, I commit to:

1. providing formative feedback on all assignments where revision is expected and providing feedback upon request for assignments where revision is not expected;
2. engaging with and responding thoughtfully to student work in a timely manner, especially when revision is required;
3. providing clear and reasonable criteria for major assignments;
4. providing oral or written feedback to explain judgments of quality as necessary;
5. seriously reconsidering judgements of quality if requested as part of a one-on-one meeting (i.e., office hours or arranged meeting [in-person or Zoom]);
6. creating availability for meetings with individual students who want to confer on drafts;
7. considering upon request extenuating circumstances to raise (but never lower) grades that do not meet students' expectations based on the above contracts
8. re-evaluating contract criteria in consultation with class members, if requested.

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

Calendar (**OBVIOUSLY!**) subject to change with fair warning

Readings listed should be read BEFORE class

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are on Canvas

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/21	<p>Due: Bring an object to introduce yourself</p> <p>During Class: Introductions, syllabus/grading contracts, defining our intellectual task, what we bring to the task [literacy map]</p>
2	8/28	<p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #1 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: New teacher! Yay! Weird!</p>
3	9/4	<p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #2 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: How we gonna do this thing?</p>
4	9/11	<p>Before class: Read Hart-Davidson, "Have We Ever Done A Good Job Teaching Writing?"</p> <p>Hesse, "We Know What Works in Teaching Composition"</p> <p>Wardle, "You Can Learn to Write in General"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings" page (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #3 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: What we know, and what we think we know</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
5	9/18	<p>Before class: Read Parker, "Where English Departments Came From"</p> <p>Rose, "Language of Exclusion"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #4 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Some history, some deeply held assumptions</p>
6	9/25	<p>CLASS ACTIVITIES WILL BE ONLINE (ASYNCHRONOUS) THIS WEEK.</p> <p>Before class: Read Babb, "America is Facing a Literacy Crisis"</p> <p>Branson, "First-Year Composition Prepares Students for Academic Writing"</p> <p>Parrott, "Some People are Just Born Good Writers"</p> <p>Pattanayak, "There is One Correct Way of Writing and Speaking"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #5 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class Time: [ASYNCHRONOUS, ON-CANVAS] Professional Development Activities [#1: Generative AI Evaluation (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/assignments/7137091)]</p> <p>[#2: Microlessons for Early Start (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/assignments/7137115)]</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	10/2	<p>Before class: Read Oleksiak, "Queer Praxis for Peer Review"</p> <p>Meeks, "Givers Gain Teaching Philosophy"</p> <p>Meeks, "3 Feedback Design Lessons" (link)</p> <p>Hart-Davidson, "Describe-Evaluate-Suggest video" (link)</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #6 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: How we respond to writers</p>
8	10/9	<p>Before class: Read Matsuda, "Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity"</p> <p>Williams, "Phenomenology of Error"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #7 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: How we respond to students</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
9	10/16	<p>Before class: Read Royster, "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own"</p> <p>Bloom, "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Mid-Semester Evaluation; Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #8 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: I got problems, you got 'em too</p>
10	10/23	<p>Before class: Read Alexander and Rhodes, "Queerness, Multimodality, and the Possibilities of Re/Orientation"</p> <p>Hart-Davidson, "Writing with Robots and other Curiosities of the Age of Machine Rhetorics"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #9 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Oh yeah, teh robotz</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	10/30	<p>Before class: Read Alvarez, "Translanguaging Tareas"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Cedillo and Bratta, "Relating Our Experiences"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Young, "Should Writers Use They Own English?"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #10 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: What do?</p>
12	11/6	<p>Before class: Read Corder, "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">hooks, "Engaged Pedagogy"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #11 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: The real pedagogy is the friends we made along the way</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
13	11/13	<p>Before class: Read Powell, "Learning (Teaching) to Teach (Learn)"</p> <p>Brooke, "Underlife and Writing Instruction"</p> <p>[all these readings can be located in the "Readings (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1590043/pages/readings)." page]</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #12 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Rock the boat, don't tip the boat over!</p>
14	11/20	<p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #13 by 11:59PM the day before class [NO NEW READING]</p> <p>During Class: CV, teaching statement, etc.; introduce portfolio</p>
15	11/27	FALL RECESS, no class
16	12/4	During Class: PRESENTATIONS! (potluck?)
Final Exam	WED, 12/11 7:45- 10:00pm	<p>Due: Final Reflection & Teaching Portfolio</p> <p>During Class: PRESENTATIONS! (potluck?)</p>