

# First Year Writing

## ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 83 Fully Online 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/15/2026

### Contact Information

Instructor(s):	Johnny Damm
Office Location:	FOB 118
Telephone:	408-924-5046
Email:	john.damm@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	M/W 9:15-10:15 (In-Person and Zoom by appt.)
Class Days/Time:	Online/ Asynchronous
Classroom:	Online

### Course Information

In this course section specifically, we will analyze and write about the forces that surround us on a daily basis: advertising, the popular culture we consume, and the university itself. The idea here is to utilize writing to take a greater stake in our daily lives—to utilize the essay form to become more active participants in our culture(s).

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 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

---

You need to complete the online modules in the allotted times, participate in all online class activities, and be courteous to your peers and to your teacher.

**Generative AI Policy:** All use of generative AI/ large LLMs at any stage of your course work is wholly prohibited. This course is designed to improve your skills of analysis and critical thinking, and the use of generative AI is an impediment to these goals. Again, no AI usage is allowed for any coursework in this class. This includes paraphrasing software such as Grammarly.

All essay assignments will be automatically submitted to Turnitin, which scans for AI usage. Any AI usage will result in an automatic zero.

## 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 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

---

We have no textbook for this class, but there is reading due for nearly every class. The reading can be found either linked in the syllabus or in as PDFs in Canvas.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

---

Essay # 1: analysis of an advertisement

Essay # 2: analysis of a music video

Essay # 3: analysis of a university issue (includes outside research) Visual Essay: crafting a thesis through visual images

Photo Essay: making an argument visually

#### Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

Assignment	Word Count	GELO

Essay # 1	1,000-1,250	1-5
Photo Essay	N/A	2-4
Essay # 2	1,250-1,500	1-5
Essay # 3	1,750-2,000	1-5

Writing Portfolio: At the end of the semester you will compile a portfolio of your writing that documents how you met the learning goals of the course.

## ✓ Grading Information

---

**Course Grade Breakdown: Essay # 1 20 %; Essay # 2 20 %; Essay 3 20%; Visual Essay 10 %; Module Completion 30 %**

The revision process is central to this class, so you will be responsible for writing a minimum of two complete drafts (more may be required, but never less) for each essay. While only the final draft will be graded, not turning in earlier drafts on time will result in a deduction of up to one letter grade.

Late papers (including drafts) will be docked up to one full letter grade each day they are late. Students must receive a C- or higher to pass the course

### About Grades

Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but in all cases essay grades will reflect the paper's effectiveness, which is broken down into three major areas: content (this includes maturity and sophistication of thought), organization, and expression.

An "A" range essay is organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar, mechanics, and usage.

A "B" range essay demonstrates competence in the same categories as an "A" essay, but it may show slight weakness in one of these areas. It will respond to the topic suitably and may contain some grammatical, mechanical or usage errors.

A "C" range essay will complete the requirements of the assignment, but it will show weaknesses in fundamentals, such as development. It may show weakness in mastery of grammar, mechanics, usage, or voice.

A "D" range essay will neglect to meet all the requirements of the assignment or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic. It may lack development or fail to stay on topic. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.

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

A (92-100); A- (90-91); B+ (88-89); B (82-87); B- (80-81); C+ (78-79); C (70-77); C- (70-71); D+ (68-69); D (62-67); D- (60-61); F (<60)

## 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

---

*This schedule is subject to change with fair notice.*

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Jan 26-27	Course Introduction  Homework: Read <a href="#">"What is Advertising?"</a> , O'Barr (Online)
Jan 28-30	Advertising Day 1: Analyzing the Messages All Around Us  Homework: Read "For the Rest of Us": A Reader Oriented Interpretation of Apple's '1984' Commercial," Scott
Feb 2-3	Advertising Day 2: Transfer and "Classic" Ads  HW: Read "Misreading the Rhetorical Situation: An Analysis of the Kendall Jenner Pepsi Commercial," Dozé (PDF);  Choose ADVERTISEMENT for Essay 1 (this choice can be changed later)

Feb 4-6	Advertising Day 3: Weird Ads and Prewriting  ESSAY 1 ADVERTISEMENT DUE
Feb 9-10	Advertising Day 4: Check-In and Analyzing YOUR Ad  HW: "Guidelines for Composing Your Essay" (PDF), Excelsior OWL: <a href="#">Essay Writing</a> (Online; scan entire section); Write Thesis
Feb 11-13	Advertising Day 5: Going Beneath the Surface and Your Thesis
Feb 16-17	All About Your Essay  ESSAY 1 DUE SEPTEMBER 16
Feb 18-20	Checking Your Essay, Political Advertising, and the Hype Model
Feb 23-24	Music Video Day 1: Videos and Politics  HW: Read <a href="#">"An Expert's Take on the Symbolism in Childish Gambino's Viral 'This Is America' Video."</a> Gajanan (Online)
Feb 25-27	Music Video Day 2: Representation is Political  HW: Read Intro to <i>From Bandanas to Berets: A Critical Analysis of Beyoncé's "Formation" Video</i> , James (PDF)
Mar 2-3	Music Video Day 3: Gender/ Sexuality is Political  HW: Plan for Essay 2
Mar 4-6	Music Video Day 4: The Personal is Political (Storytelling)  Homework: Choose Your Video / Work on Your Essay
Mar 9-10	All About Your Essay Day 1
Mar 11-13	All About Your Essay Day 2  HW: ESSAY # 2 PEER EDITING DRAFT

Mar 16-17	<p>ESSAY # 2 PEER EDITING DRAFT DUE; Peer Editing</p> <p>HW: ESSAY # 2 FINAL DRAFT</p>
Mar 18-20	Check and Rewrite Your Essay; Introduction to the Photo Essay
Mar 23-24	Photo Essay Day 1: Making the Invisible Visible
Mar 25-27	Photo Essay Day 2: Constructing an Argument Through Images
Apr 6-7	Complete and Submit Your Photo Essay!
Apr 8-10	Present Your Visual Essay; Introduction to Our Next Subject
Apr 13-14	<p>Arguing the University Day 1: What is College For/</p> <p>HW: Read "<a href="#">Colleges Spend Like There's No Tomorrow</a>" and "<a href="#">Just Released 'How America Pays for College 2024' Report</a>"</p>
Apr 15-17	<p>Arguing the University Day 2: The University and Money</p> <p>HW: Read "<a href="#">High-Quality, Flexible Learning from Tech Savvy Teachers</a>" and "<a href="#">With Online Learning, 'Let's Take a Breath and See What Worked and Didn't Work'</a>"</p>
Apr 20-21	<p>Arguing The University Day 3: Online Education and Technology</p> <p>HW: Read <a href="#">Excellence at Yale Doubted as Nearly Everyone Gets As</a> and</p> <p><a href="#">Empowering Students Through Evaluation: Over 50 Years Without Grades at Hampshire College (Chapter)</a></p>
Apr 22-24	<p>Arguing the University Day 4: Grades and Modeling the Essay Pre-Writing Process</p> <p>HW: Choose Essay Topic and Experiment With Research in the Library Databases</p>

Apr 27-28	Arguing the University Day 5: Colleges and Protests/ Research & Your Annotated Bibliography
Apr 29- May 1	Arguing The University Day 6: Final Check-In and Your Thesis
May 4-5	Present Your Essay and Finish Your Peer-Editing Draft  HW: ESSAY # 3 PEER EDITING DRAFT
May 6-8	ESSAY # 3 PEER EDITING DRAFT DUE; Peer Editing
May 11	Final Class Module; Understanding the E-Portfolio  ESSAY # 3 FINAL DRAFT DUE
May 14	ePortfolio due to Canvas by 9:45 PM