

Critical Thinking and Writing

ENGL 2

Spring 2026 Section 29 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/21/2026

Contact Information

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Office Hours: By appointment Tuesdays via Zoom @8am to 10 am

Classroom: Sweeney 238

Course Information

This course explores *The Ethics of Influence*—how reasoning, persuasion, and moral responsibility intersect in public and personal discourse. Students will study the principles of logic, including syllogisms, enthymemes, and common logical fallacies, while examining how these tools are used and misused in the modern world.

Students will learn how to utilize the persuasive strategies of rhetorical thinkers, including Aristotle, Stephen Toulmin, Carl Rogers, Kenneth Burke, John Stuart Mill, Dale Carnegie, and Jean Twenge.

Through argumentative essays and analytical writing, students will develop clear, ethical reasoning and persuasive strategies. Finally, exams will challenge students to apply these concepts actively and critically in both written and oral arguments.

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>).

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

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Construct clear, logical, and persuasive written arguments in essays of at least 1,000 words that demonstrate coherent structure and evidence-based reasoning.
- Identify and evaluate common logical fallacies and weak reasoning in spoken and written communication.
- Explain and apply the use of syllogisms and enthymemes in structured argumentation.
- Analyze how logic and persuasion shape decisions in modern contexts such as social media and advertising.
- Assess the ethical implications of using logic and rhetoric to influence others.
- Demonstrate improved critical reading, thinking, and writing skills through essays, discussions, and exams.
- Apply logical reasoning to evaluate ethical dilemmas and real-world cases.

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

The theme of this course is "The Ethics of Influence." To study this concept more deeply, we will explore two central texts: Jean M. Twenge's "i-Gen" and Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

In the digital age of social influence, writers will analyze what it means to be persuasive in a world dominated by technological connections.

The reading scheduled in the syllabus will activate our understanding of what defines good writing. With our study of genres and templates, we will examine how to adjust our writing and thinking to achieve a particular outcome. We'll also analyze each other's work as a means of understanding how models of texts and reading influence the writing process. Since we'll be working with texts digitally, students should be prepared to bring a laptop or smart device to act as writing tools that will support collaborative work.

Other technology requirements/equipment/material

- Students will need access to a laptop/computer/smart device to access media during in-class sessions.
- Students will also utilize a variety of digital applications to conduct writing activities, rhetorical exercises, and critical analysis with platforms such as Miro, Figjam, Hypothesis, and more.
- Access to steady wi-fi for Zoom sessions, office hours, and discussion board posts.

Course Requirements and Assignments

All written work submitted in this course must be originally produced by you, the student. If you utilize an outside source, you must properly cite the source in the assignment.

Generative artificial intelligence tools—software that creates new text, images, computer code, audio, video, and other content—have become widely available. Well-known examples include ChatGPT for text and DALL•E for images. This policy governs all such tools, including those released during our semester together. You may use generative AI image tools on assignments for multimodal purposes. Try to avoid the use of Grammarly as a substitute for authentic composition, and instead use your own voice to crystallize logic and analysis. Trust in the process.

On the other hand, AI can be used to conduct research and aggregate data. Using AI as a lens for evidence, or even as an editing and writing process, can be quite beneficial. The use of AI technology as it applies to either case is fine as long as the student cites their sources.

If you do use generative AI tools on assignments in this class, you must properly document and credit the tools themselves. Cite the tool you used, following the pattern for computer software given in the specified style guide. Additionally, please include a brief description of how you used the tool. If you choose to use generative AI tools, please remember that they are typically trained on limited datasets that may be out of date. Additionally, generative AI datasets are trained on pre-existing material, including copyrighted material; therefore, relying on a generative AI tool may result in plagiarism or copyright violations.

Finally, keep in mind that the goal of generative AI tools is to produce content that seems to have been produced by a human, not to produce accurate or reliable content; therefore, relying on a generative AI tool may result in your submission of inaccurate content. It is your responsibility—not the tool's—to assure the quality, integrity, and accuracy of work you submit in any college course. If you use generative AI tools to complete assignments in this course in ways that I have not explicitly authorized, I will apply the San Jose State University Code of Academic Integrity as appropriate to your specific case. In addition, you must be wary of unintentional plagiarism or fabrication of data. Please act with integrity, for the sake of both your personal character and your academic record.

Success in this course 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.

✓ Grading Information

Labor-Based Grading Contract

Overview:

This course uses a labor-based grading contract, which means your final grade is determined by the amount of work (labor) you complete rather than the subjective quality of your writing. The focus is on your effort, engagement, and commitment to the writing process. This approach values growth, persistence, and participation, creating a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all students.

What Counts as Labor:

- **Assigned Readings and Reflections:** You are expected to complete all assigned readings and submit thoughtful reflections or responses as specified in the syllabus.
- **Drafts and Workshops:** For each major essay, you must submit all required drafts by the deadlines and actively participate in peer review and writing workshops.
- **Revisions:** Every essay must be revised at least once after receiving instructor or peer feedback. Revisions should demonstrate meaningful engagement with the feedback provided.
- **Conferences and Group Sessions:** Attendance at all scheduled individual conferences and group writing sessions is required. These meetings are opportunities for personalized feedback and collaborative learning.
- **Participation:** Regular, on-time attendance and active participation in class discussions, activities, and group work are essential components of your labor.

Grade Structure:

To earn a B (3.0):

- Attend class regularly (no more than 5 absences).
- Participate actively in discussions and peer review.
- Submit all major assignments (drafts and final versions) on time.
- Complete all informal writing and homework assignments.
- Revise assignments thoughtfully in response to feedback.
- Adhere to assignment guidelines (length, format, etc.).
- Respond respectfully to instructor and peer feedback.

To earn a higher grade (B+ or A):

- Complete all requirements for a B.
- Submit all assignments on time with no more than 3 absences.
- Demonstrate significant revision and growth in your writing.
- Complete additional "level-up" or enrichment assignments (such as extra drafts, reflections, or research).
- Participate in optional writing conferences or workshops.

To earn a lower grade (C or below):

- Miss more than 5 classes or repeatedly arrive late.
- Miss deadlines for major assignments or fail to submit required work.
- Show minimal engagement in revision or peer feedback.
- Fail to participate in class activities.

Additional Notes:

- You may renegotiate the contract if extenuating circumstances arise, but you must communicate with the instructor promptly.
- Feedback will focus on your writing's strengths and areas for improvement, not on assigning letter grades to individual pieces.
- The contract is designed to encourage risk-taking, revision, and collaboration.

Student Acknowledgment:

By continuing in this course, you agree to the terms of this contract. If you have concerns, please discuss them with the instructor.

Why Labor-Based Grading?

This grading system is designed to:

- Encourage risk-taking and experimentation in your writing without fear of penalty for “mistakes.”
- Promote a growth mindset by rewarding effort and persistence.
- Foster a collaborative and inclusive classroom community where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Purpose:

This contract is designed to foster growth as a writer by focusing on your effort, participation, and revision, rather than solely on the quality of your finished products. If you meet the terms below, you are guaranteed at least a B (or equivalent) in the course.

- If you have questions or concerns about the contract or your progress, please reach out to me early so we can work together to ensure your success.

Major Writing Projects

Argumentative Essay 1 (20 points)

- Outline and draft proposal: 5 points
- Partial draft: 5 points
- Full draft: 5 points
- Draft letter: 5 points

Argumentative Essay 2 (20 points)

- Outline and draft proposal: 5 points
- Partial draft: 5 points
- Full draft: 5 points
- Draft letter: 5 points

Multimodal Presentation (20 points)

- Outline and proposal: 5 points
- Draft + Peer Review: 5 points
- Reflection: 5 points
- Presentation: 5 points

Homework/Classwork/Exercises (30+ points)

Every week, short assignments are distributed as scaffolding tasks that fold into larger projects. Typical assignments include readings and reflective prompts. In addition, collaborative in-class work will be assigned with a short writing reflection to complement the learning goals associated with each major project. Each assignment should be completed before class. An extra credit assignment will also be available as limited "side quests" to enhance specific skills in writing, analysis, and rhetoric.

Portfolio (10 points)

- Annotated Bibliography: 5
- Reflection Essay: 5

Total points possible: 100+

Determination of Final Grades

- Points are awarded for each major project following a sequence of the process.
- Late submissions for each major project are subtracted a point for each day it is overdue.
- Full credit is awarded to a project/assignment/activity with developed content and timely submission.
- Current grades are available on Canvas
- Feel free to contact me via email if you have a question about an assignment or the progress of your overall final grade

While minor assignments may be accepted occasionally, draft materials on peer review workshop dates cannot be made up. Similarly, missed attendance for in-class collaborative work and reflections will be marked as incomplete. However, if an emergency occurs, please let me know in advance, and we will work together to find a solution.

- A=An "A" will be worth 90 to 100 percent of the points possible.
- B= A "B" will be worth 80 to 89 percent of the points possible.
- C= A "C" will be worth 70 to 79 percent of the points possible.
- D= A "D" will be worth 60 to 69 percent of the points possible.
- F = An "F" will be worth 0 to 59 percent of the total points possible

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

English 2: Critical Thinking and Writing, Spring 2026, Course Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. However, you will be notified in advance of any sudden shifts or transitions.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Mon 1/26	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class Introduction• Course Questions Freewrite
1	Wed 1/28	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project 1 + Ask the Expert• Argumentative Essays + Grading + Discussion Board topics• HW #1: 3 Essays
2	Mon 2/2	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Everything is an Argument."• Logic: Syllogisms + Enthymemes + Topic Sentences
2	Wed 2/4	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I-Gen discussion• Applying Logic to the habits of Tech + Social Media
3	Mon 2/9	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I-Gen Ch 2: Online time and Other Media Too• Quotation Sandwiches

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
3	Wed 2/11	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-Gen Ch. 3: In Person No More • Toulmin Method • Argumentative Essay 1 Outline + Proposal due
4	Mon 2/16	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotation Sandwiches • Dale Carnegie: How to Win People to Your Way of Thinking 1
4	Wed 2/18	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dale Carnegie: How to Win People to Your Way of Thinking 2 • Quiz
5	Mon 2/23	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deceptive Arguments: Logical Fallacies • Burkean Rhetoric + Identification • 2 Rooms, 1 Boom
5	Wed 2/25	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentative Essay 1 Rough Draft + Peer Review
6	Mon 3/2	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing Your Mind • Burkean Rhetoric + Identification • Rogerian Rhetoric • Rogerian Debate
6	Wed 3/4	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Choice Exam Prep: Infinity Mode • Argumentative Essay 1 Revision + Draft Letter

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	Mon 3/9	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Stuart Mills • Denotation + Connotation • Argumentative Essay Outline 2 due
7	Wed 3/11	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dale Carnegie: 6 Ways to Make People Like You • Exercise: Make us Like You
8	Mon 3/16	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-Gen Ch. 4 + Ch. 7 • Project 3: The Multimodal Presentation
8	Wed 3/18	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Choice Exam: Trust No One
9	Mon 3/23	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral Exam: Werewolf Rhetoric
9	Wed 3/25	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentative Essay 2 Rough Draft + Peer Review
10	Mon 3/30	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Break: No Class Meeting
10	Wed 4/1	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Break: No Class Meeting
11	Mon 4/6	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Conferences Group A

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	Wed 4/8	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Conferences Group B
12	Mon 4/13	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Conferences Group C
12	Wed 4/15	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Conferences Group D • Multimodal Presentation Outlines Due
13	Mon 4/20	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-portfolio Annotated Bibliography
13	Wed 4/22	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-portfolio Reflection Essay Overview + Surveys • Multimodal Presentation Rough Draft + Peer Review
14	Mon 4/27	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-portfolio Reflection Essay Overview + Surveys • Multimodal Presentation Group A
14	Wed 4/29	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multimodal Presentations Group B
15	Mon 5/4	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multimodal Presentations Group C
15	Wed 5/6	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multimodal Presentations Group D

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
16	Mon 5/11	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Class Meeting • Final Exam Part: ??? <p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Portfolio: Reflection Essay, Annotated Bibliography • English 2 Assessment Spring 2026