

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 09 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/22/2026

Course: ENGL 1A: Section 09, First-Year Writing

Instructor: Michael Muszynski

Email: michael.muszynski@sjsu.edu

Phone: N/A

Office Location: Faculty Offices 115 (FOB 115)

Office Hours: In-person: Before class, 12-1 PM Tuesdays and Thursdays, Online: By appointment

Class Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Classroom: Hugh Gillis Hall 120

Contact Information

You can reach me through my email: michael.muszynski@sjsu.edu

This is your first year of college, and a lot of things are changing all at once (socially, culturally, academically, professionally, biologically). If you need anything, concerning this class or not, feel free to contact me via email 24/7, and I will respond within 24 hours on weekdays and 72 hours on weekends. Regarding emails pertaining to your assignments, to ensure that our communication is clear, timely, and productive for everyone, please follow the guidelines below.

When it comes to coursework, before emailing me, please complete this quick checklist:

1. Check the syllabus for answers to questions about policies, schedules, and assignments.
2. Review the day's class notes/slides and any instructions given in class.
3. Check our Canvas for posted materials, announcements, and updates.
4. Ask a classmate if you're unsure about something that may have been clarified during the class you missed.

Most questions can be answered more quickly using these resources rather than waiting for me to respond, and doing so helps you develop important academic and professional self-advocacy habits.

Please feel free to reach out when:

1. You have a question after checking the above resources.
2. You need clarification that is not available in the posted materials.
3. You have a concern that requires my attention in private (e.g., accessibility/accommodations, extended absences, personal circumstances, etc.).
4. You want to discuss your progress or schedule a meeting.

I expect you to practice proper netiquette. To help me assist you more efficiently, please include the following in your email.

1. A clear subject line (ex, "Question about Reading Response 3")
2. A brief explanation of your question and what you have already looked into
3. Your full name and class section (e.g., ENGL 1A, Sec. XX)

Please write emails as you would communicate in a professional setting. For absences, consult the Canvas and your peers for missed materials first; email me only if something essential remains unclear. Every class meeting is worth attending and is designed intentionally, so your presence is always essential.

I am always happy to support you, but my response time will be much faster and more helpful if you follow the steps above.

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

Time Commitment: 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.

ENGL 1A is a 3-unit course. That means you are committing to at least 9 hours of study per week for this class. 2.5 hours will be class time. For the remaining 6.5 hours a week, you will work independently or with your peers to prepare for class and complete reading and writing assignments.

Writing: Writing is at the heart of our class. Our exploration of writing will prepare us and each other for academic and real-world writing scenarios. Assignments will give students repeated practice in all phases of the writing process: prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. Students in ENGL 1A must write at least 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form. That sounds like a lot, but the writing will build through multiple drafts of several assignments. Specific descriptions and instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas.

Reading: ENGL 1A is primarily a writing class, but reading is an essential part of being a writer. While I encourage you to read on your own outside of class, there will be required readings throughout the semester; some will come from texts I select, and some will be from sources you find. We will also use videos and other multimedia to add insights to our classroom.

Respect: Be nice, don't be mean. Students are expected to respect the unique perspectives we bring to our classroom as we engage with peers and assignments. In class, discussion is welcome and encouraged, but comments found to be intentionally offensive, disrespectful, or combative will not be tolerated. Additionally, if anything in class causes you alarm for any reason, I encourage you to contact me directly and privately whenever possible.

Absences: If you miss a day of class, it happens; however, your classwork and your grade are your responsibility. If assignments are due that day, you need to have arranged any possible extensions beforehand. Free Writes and In-Class Activities have participation points assigned to them; they cannot be completed outside of class, which can negatively affect your grade. These points can only be made up with extra-credit opportunities. All in all, if you show up to class, you get the points; if you don't show up to class, you don't get the points.

Technology: For this course, you will complete all your assignments online using Google Docs, Google Slides, and YouTube, then submit them on Canvas. I don't accept hard copies of essays because I don't want to carry around or keep up with stacks of papers. You are expected to bring a laptop, smartphone, or iPad to class each day to work on assignments. If you don't have access to a computer, please see the technology desk at the SJSU library.

Restroom Breaks: Welcome to college. If you need to use the restroom at any point, there is no need to ask me. Please leave the classroom politely and quietly (ex, maybe not slamming the door) to avoid disrupting your fellow students.

Cell Phone Usage: If you need to use your cell phone to Google something, respond to a text, or pull up an assignment, you may do so. We are adults with other priorities, but please do not let it become a distraction for you or others in class. Please bring a laptop to work on during class. Be respectful of your fellow students and me when using your cell phone. You may step outside of class if you need to take a call. Although we'll be using technology often, please don't abuse my relatively relaxed policy on it by scrolling through Reddit, reading fanfiction, watching YouTube shorts, swiping on Tinder, etc. It's important that we are all present to have engaging discussions, and using technology for such activities during class can be distracting. If technology becomes too disruptive during class, we may need to revisit this policy.

Food and Drink: Drinks are always fine (except for alcoholic beverages). If you need to eat a snack in class, that's fine, too, as long as you're not distracting others. Don't do the thing where you take five minutes to try to 'quietly' open a bag of chips. Just rip it open. However, please do not bring a full meal or order meals during class. You can show up late if you need to finish your meal somewhere else on campus. Please be respectful of other classes who will use our room and clean up your crumbs, spills, and other messes.

Accommodations: If you need accommodations for your learning, please contact me. I will adjust my teaching methods to best support you and can refer you to other resources that can enhance your learning experience at SJSU.

If you test positive for COVID-19 during the semester, please reach out to me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary accommodations. The CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 5 days until you test negative. Please follow these guidelines carefully.

Masks are not required inside classrooms at this time. If anyone chooses to wear a mask while in class, their decision will be respected. If guidelines change and masks become mandatory again, there will be a zero-tolerance policy for anyone who refuses to wear one.

SJSU offers several resources to support your success in this course, including counseling and psychological care, mentoring and tutoring, food and housing assistance, technology support, and writing help.

Accessible Education Center

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Peer Connections

SJSU Cares

Spartan Food Pantry

Student Technology Resources

Writing Center

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 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

Please bring a laptop, iPad, or other device you can use to write and/or open Canvas in each class.

Wallets rejoice. There is no book for this class; all readings will be provided on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignment #1: *Media Critique Presentation*: Students record a presentation discussing two pieces of media (forum posts, newspaper clippings, YouTube videos), one is an example of a good source and the other a bad source, for a possible paper on that topic they wish to explore. They explain why one is credible, and the other isn't, focusing on source evaluation, bias, and the authors' usage of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos.

Assignment #2: *Anything Report*: Students choose any topic (current event, piece of media, personal experience) and use examples and evidence to write a 4-page argumentative, explanatory, or reflective essay. Must use at least three credible sources and show clear essay structure and organization skills.

Assignment #3: *I Believe Essay*: Students must state "I believe..." in their thesis and support it with a variety of evidence gathered through their chosen research method: literature review, survey, or interview. 4 pages.

Assignment #4 (Final): *Video Essay Adaptation*: Students adapt and revise a chosen earlier paper into a 600-word script for a video essay, which they will then create with voiceover and visual aids. For those of you daunted by creating digital media, we will cover how to use Adobe apps in order to complete this assignment.

Assignment #5: *Reflection and Portfolio*: 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 discuss the portfolio later in the semester.

Notebook: Your notebook will include your daily coursework on Canvas or in class. Your notebook can be a physical paper notebook or a Google Doc on your laptop. Keep your writing organized, and do not throw away or delete anything you work on for this class.

Free Writes: Most days, students will respond to prompts at the beginning of class to apply knowledge from the readings, brainstorm assignment ideas, or reflect on their in-class experiences. Completing in-class free writes counts toward your participation grade.

In-Class Activities: From scavenger hunts and Kahoots to discussions and group presentations, points will be awarded for the activities we do in class. Show up to get these points.

Reading Responses: Students will reflect on what they learned, ask further discussion questions, or participate in activities from that week's readings (approx. 250 words each).

Notebook Checks: You will have a notebook check for each unit of our class. All I ask is for you to type up and send me three of your favorite notebook entries from that unit (free writes or reading responses). The total word count for these notebook checks should be 300 words each. For each entry, please provide the prompt you are responding to for free writing or the name of the text you are talking about for reading responses. The better you keep up with the free writes and reading responses inside and outside of class, the easier these notebook checks should be.

✓ Grading Information

Overall Grade: Your overall grade for the class will be based on the following percentages (of a total of 1000 possible points).

Component	Grade %	Points	Word Count	CLOs
Participation (In-Class Activities and Free Writes)	15%	150pts. (5*20 ICAs & 2.5*20 FWs)	~1000words	1, 2, 3, 4
Notebook Checks (3)	15%	150pts. (50 pts. each)	~1000 words	1, 2, 5
Reading Responses (5)	10%	100pts. (20 pts. each)	1250 words	1, 3, 5
Assignment 1 Media Critique	7.5%	75pts.	N/A	1, 3, 4
Assignment 2 Anything Report	12%	120pts. (60 ROUGH + 60 FINAL)	1500 words (500 ROUGH + 1000 FINAL)	1, 2, 5
Assignment 3 "I Believe" Essay	12%	120pts. (60 ROUGH + 60 FINAL)	1500 words (500 ROUGH + 1000 FINAL)	1, 2, 5
Assignment 4 Video Script + Adaptation	12%	120pts. (45 VIDEO + 45 SCRIPT + 30 Peer Reviews)	600 words (Video Script) + 150 Peer Reviews)	1, 2, 4
Assignment 5 Final Portfolio Reflection	7.5%	75pts.	550 words (Written Reflection)	1, 3, 5
Peer Reviews (9)	9%	90pts. (10 pts. each)	450 words (50 each)	1, 2, 3, 4
TOTALS:	100%	1000 pts.	8,000 words	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Late Work: Stuff happens. I understand that. Lots of things start to pile up, your attention shifts to other priorities, and you learn that you might not be able to complete the assignments for this class when they are due. I can be very flexible with this. Excused late work is arranged by extension, requiring a written

email to me requesting it and my response accepting it; it can be counted for full credit, but unexcused late work appears out of nowhere without any notification to me. Ultimately, your coursework is your responsibility. I will not hunt you down if you have not completed an assignment for this class, nor remind you that you need to do it.

I will accept all late work until the final day of class; a full letter grade will be deducted from the final score for any unexcused late work if it is a week late. If unexcused late work is more than a week late, it will be accepted for half credit. All assignments will be due at 11:59 PM on the due date, with a fairly wide grace period. If there is any reason you cannot make a deadline for an assignment (because life happens), please let me know BEFORE THE DUE DATE, and we can arrange an extension. Extensions cannot be arranged after the due date.

If an assignment's due date is changed, I will notify the class beforehand. Additionally, I do not accept peer reviews as late work if they come after the Final Draft due dates. If you must submit both a rough draft and a final draft late, you must allocate me some time to give you feedback between the two drafts.

Grading Policy: If you have any questions about how an assignment is graded or what is expected of you, please contact me. Your grade will be determined by the points you earn in the different sections of each assignment's rubric. Our letter-grade scale for all assignments is as follows:

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 = (59% or less)

AI/Plagiarism Policy: Plagiarism is the process or practice of using another person's ideas or work and pretending that it is your own. The previous sentence is an example of plagiarism, since I simply copied and pasted the definition of plagiarism from the Cambridge Dictionary's website without quoting, paraphrasing,

or citing the source. Overall, you are going to use the writing or ideas of others in this class, so you will explore different ways to write them in your own words and properly cite them for your readers to research these ideas further. Copying, reusing, or stealing the work of others will result in a loss of points at best and more drastic academic consequences at worst.

The university's current stance on the usage of AI is as follows: "Submitting AI-generated work is categorically a violation of SJSU's academic integrity policy, which includes a definition of plagiarism as 'the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements."

For the most part, I think Grammarly and other spell-checkers are fair to use. However, AI, and we're mostly talking about LLMs like ChatGPT here, is an ever-changing tool that many of us do not fully understand. Currently, it causes a lot of problems: many companies use it to replace human employees; its unsustainable servers damage the environment; and most of the work it 'creates' unethically draws on bits and pieces of other people's ideas without their permission in order to generate the responses and content it gives you. Ultimately, I will not allow you to use it at any stage of the writing process because you must develop these critical writing skills. I invite you to see college as preparation for the professional world. When you use AI to complete your assignments or tasks for you, you are literally making the case to your employers that AI should do your job in the future. Do you want a job? Then don't use AI to do the work; otherwise, what is the point of you?

My general rule of thumb is that if you must ask yourself, "Am I cheating by using AI?" or "Is this plagiarism?" you probably shouldn't do it. But please contact me or come to my office hours if you need help understanding plagiarism or are ever unsure if something is or isn't considered plagiarism.

Extra Credit: Many CLA events and Writing Center workshops are available on campus for you to participate in and learn about writing. I can't force you to attend these—however valuable they can be—I can offer you extra credit if you do attend them.

My deal for you is this: if you attend one of these events and write a quick journal entry about what you learned (a couple of paragraphs), I will give you 5 points to add to an assignment of your choice. For example, if you receive an 89 (B+) on your Media Critique, you can add the five points for a 94 (A). Extra credit can be added to submitted and graded assignments, meaning it cannot replace assignments; however you can use them to make up for Free-Writes and In-Class Activities you missed while absent. You may attend as many of these events as you wish, but you must write up each one.

List of Semester CLA Events and Writing Workshops with Dates:

<https://www.clasanjose.org/copy-of-featured-authors>

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/workshops-events/index.php>

Another way to earn extra credit is to apply for and participate in the Digital Literacy Showcase. This is an SJSU event sponsored by Adobe where first-year writing students present their in-class work using Adobe

products. Students can earn five points for applying. We'll talk about this more in class!

Outside of extra credit, I do not round up grades.

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

UNIT ONE	01	THU Jan 22	Introductions + Discussion Posts	TUE Jan 27	Creating Slides and Presentations DUE: Reading Response #1
	02	THU Jan 29	Rhetoric: Ethos, Pathos, Logos	TUE Feb 3	Finding and Integrating Sources DUE: Reading Response #2
	03	THU Feb 5	Professional Writing	TUE Feb 10	Basic APA Formatting DUE: Media Critiques
	04	THU Feb 12	Media Critiques: Peer Review	TUE Feb 17	Essay Expectations 1: Explanatory, Argumentative, Reflective Writing DUE: Notebook Check #1

UNIT TWO	05	THU Feb 19	Essay Expectations 2: Introductions, Body Paragraphs, Conclusions	TUE Feb 24	Campus Scavenger Hunt DUE: Anything Report [ROUGH]
	06	THU Feb 26	Creating Easy-To-Read Sentences and Paragraphs	TUE Mar 3	NO CLASS + at-home work DUE: Anything Report: Peer Review
	07	THU Mar 5	NO CLASS + at-home work DUE: Reading Response #3	TUE Mar 10	Crafting Discussion Questions
	08	THU Mar 12	Writer Toolboxes DUE: Anything Report [FINAL]	TUE Mar 17	Research Methods
UNIT THREE	09	THU Mar 19	In-Class Research Day DUE: Notebook Check #2	TUE Mar 24	Arguments, The Great Debate
	10	THU Mar 26	Constructing APA Kahoots DUE: "I Believe" Essay [ROUGH]	TUE Mar 31	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS
	11	THU Apr 2	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS	TUE Apr 7	"I Believe" Essay: Peer Review DUE: "I Believe" Essay: Peer Review
	12	THU Apr 9	Reverse-Outlining DUE: Reading Response #4	TUE Apr 14	Genre Activities

UNIT FOUR	13	THU	Revising Apr 16 DUE: "I Believe" Essay [FINAL]	TUE Apr 21	Adapting Your Writing
	14	THU	Using Visual Aids Apr 23 DUE: Reading Response #5	TUE Apr 28	Video Workshop #1
	15	THU	Video Workshop #2 Apr 30 DUE: Notebook Check #3	TUE May 5	Reflection Workshop #1
	16	THU	Reflection Workshop #2 May 7	FINAL (TBD)	DUE: Video Script DUE: Video Essay Adaptation DUE: Reflection Portfolio